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LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.

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The Spirit

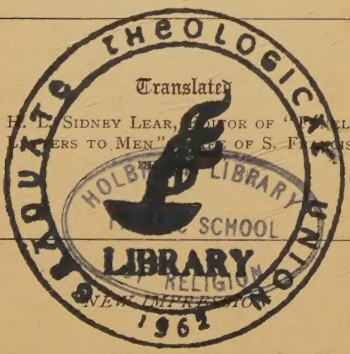
OF

S. FRANCIS DE SALES

BISHOP AND PRINCE OF GENEVA

BY JEAN PIERRE CAMUS

BISHOP OF BELLEY



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PREFACE.

JEAN PIERRE CAMUS, Bishop of Belley, was the author of more than two hundred books! Nevertheless his literary fame now rests solely upon that one production the substance of which is here translated, namely, his "Esprit du Bienheureux François de Sales."

Devoted to the venerable Bishop of Geneva, passionately loving and admiring him, both as his spiritual Father and his dearest earthly friend, Bishop Camus made use of that marvellous memory which he has himself described as almost inconveniently retentive and capacious (p. 151), in recording a variety of small facts and casual sayings of S. Francis which combine to set before us a most vivid impression of both Bishops, and convey a life-like feeling of real acquaintance with them in their daily career, such as no studied biography could produce. The Bishop of Belley has been called an ecclesiastical Boswell in consequence. His admiration for his master and friend took what certainly seems to our notions an inconvenient form. So anxious was he to study Francis de Sales under every possible aspect, even under that usually held sacred from all intrusion, his bedchamber, that he actually bored holes in the wainscot, so as to be able, unsuspected, to watch the saintly Bishop when at his private devotions, his toilet, or asleep! Moreover, Bishop Camus strove to imitate the object of his devotion in manner, gesture, and style of preaching (a form of affection, by the way, not altogether unknown to

the present generation of religious enthusiasm!), the result being, as he honestly tells us, that Francis averred he "spoilt the Bishop of Belley without in any way succeeding in copying the Bishop of Geneva" (p. 343).

This close habit of observation and minute reproduction has, however, resulted in preserving many most valuable sayings of the venerable Francis de Sales which no ordinary biography would have reached; and while content to leave the two hundred and odd other works of Bishop Camus in oblivion, we must feel heartily grateful to him for the survivor.

Various editions have been published since the first, in six volumes, dedicated by the author to the Sisters of the Visitation. Of these the most bulky, and unquestionably the most minute, is the edition published by M. Depéry, Vicaire-Général of Belley, afterward Bishop of Gap, in 1840. But even his three volumes have been considered as too diffuse for general readers, and this translation has accordingly been made from an edition published at Tournai in 1846, carefully edited by the Superior of that Seminary, re-arranged and corrected from the edition which Collot, a Docteur de Sorbonne, published in 1727. Careful comparison with other editions leads the translator to hope that, though far from perfect, the main points and beauties of the original work, the characteristic playfulness and the salient peculiarities of the two episcopal friends, have been preserved as far as may be.

Jean Pierre Camus was a Burgundian, of good birth on both sides of the family. His reputation for eloquence reached Henri IV., who recognized the son of a devoted adherent in the young preacher, and at an earlier age than was canonically lawful, the King appointed him to the Bishopric of Belley, a very poor and neglected diocese in Savoy. Pope Paul V. granted the necessary dispensation, and

on August 30, 1609, Jean Pierre Camus was consecrated in the cathedral of Belley, by Francis de Sales, assisted by Lefebre, Archbishop of Tarsus, and Berthelot, Bishop of Damascus. The young Bishop leant upon his friend for guidance in almost everything, and a courier was kept employed, so he tells us, in maintaining a constant communication between Annecy and Belley.

Bishop Camus used to talk of resigning his See from time to time, but Francis de Sales never would allow him to take any steps towards carrying out such an intention. When the Bishop of Geneva died, however, Bishop Camus decided on leaving his active life for one of study and contemplation; and having obtained the appointment of a worthy successor, he retired to the Abbey of Aunay, near Caen, in 1628-29. He did not long enjoy the coveted retirement, for the Archbishop of Rouen was incapacitated by sickness, and he eagerly claimed Bishop Camus's assistance in his arduous diocese. However, after having answered to this call, as sent from God, Bishop Camus finally resolved to spend the rest of his life among the poor, and selected the Hôpital des Incurables, in the Rue de Sèvres, Paris, as his abode. He gave up all his fortune to the poor, except an annuity of 500 livres, and henceforth devoted himself to the incurables, among whom he lived, as though he were a chaplain of the hospital, or indeed a nurse, for the polished, fastidious Bishop did not scruple to dress loathsome sores, or tend the sick with a woman's gentleness. He had no servant; he slept on a straw bed, and extended his love of poverty so far as to possess no linen of his own, but was supplied, like the poor inmates of the hospital, with that belonging to the establishment.

While leading this life, Louis XIV. pressed the Diocese of Arras, which was in a pitiable state of confusion, upon Bishop Camus, and he yielded

reluctantly so far as to go to Arras, where he lived in the hospital for a time: but war and political troubles delaying the official confirmation of his appointment he returned to the Rue de Sèvres, where he died not long after, April 25th, 1652, having intimated to the congregation in the Hospice Chapel, where he preached the previous Sunday, that he felt his time at hand. His last hours were most edifying; he renewed his baptismal vows, and made his profession of faith to the Curé of Saint Jean de Grève, and during the last hours of his agony, when unable to speak, his eyes were fixed with loving hope upon his crucifix. He had strictly enjoined that his burial should be free from all pomp, and in compliance with this request, he was buried in the nave of the Hospice Chapel, without any more display or ceremonial than if he had been one of the ordinary inmates.

An epitaph was placed over his grave, telling his brief tale:—

Qui sibi pauper,
Pauperibus dives,
Inter pauperes
Vivere, mori, et humari
Voluit.

But the best memorial of Bishop Camus will ever be the "Spirit of S. Francis de Sales"

CONTENTS.

PART I.

On Religious Perfection and its Practices.

CHAPTER I. On Perfection generally.

		PAGE
§	I. Charity the essence of all true perfection	1
	II. The best way to perfection is hearty love of God	2
	III. Wherein true love of God consists	3
	IV. True devotion best practised in our natural calling	5
	V. Indiscreet devotion	5
	VI. True devotion is to be found in every state of life	6
	VII. It is possible to lead a saintly life in the world	7
	VIII. True devotion avoids singularity	8
	IX. The grace of a good example	10

CHAPTER II. On Mental Prayer.

§	I. The importance of frequent meditation on the Passion of our Lord	11
	II. It is not well to multiply acts of the affections in prayer	12
	III. Simplicity in prayer	13
	IV. Concerning good resolutions	15
	V. Of spiritual dryness	16
	VI. Necessity of combining self-denial with prayer	17

CHAPTER III. On the Last Things.

§	I. The fear of death	19
	II. On long life and the wish for death	21
	III. On the wish to die	22
	IV. The best preparation for death	23

PAGE

§ V. The memory of the departed 24
VI. On Purgatory 25
VII. On the blessedness of the Saints . . . 27

CHAPTER IV. On Interior Recollection and Aspiration.

§ I. Recollection and aspiration 29
II. On recollection 29
III. Acts of the Presence of God 30
IV. The abundant consolations with which God blessed Francis de Sales 31

CHAPTER V. On the Word of God, and on Spiritual Reading.

§ I. The love of God's Word, and the results to be attained therefrom 34
II. How we ought to hear the Word of God . . 34
III. Of spiritual reading—what books to select . . 36
IV. The "Spiritual Combat" 37
V. How to profit by spiritual reading . . . 38
VI. On imitation of the Saints 38

CHAPTER VI. On the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist.

§ I. The importance of their frequent use . . . 40
II. Holy Communion 41
III. On technical classification of good works . . 42
IV. On changing one's Confessor 42
V. On scruples 44
VI. Difference between venial sin and imperfection . 44

CHAPTER VII. On Devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

§ I. Its due limits 46
II. On Confraternities 47

PART II.

On the Practice of Holiness.

CHAPTER I. General Remarks.

		PAGE
§ I.	Self-deceit	48
II.	Natural disposition, and its use in attaining holiness	49
III.	Inward amendment the first essential	50
IV.	Progress consists less in doing much than in doing a little well	51
V.	Natural impetuosity to be resisted	52
VI.	Hurry a foe to holiness	53
VII.	Of the virtues to be specially preferred	55
VIII.	Of little virtues	56
IX.	Magdalene at the foot of the Cross	58
X.	Of faithfulness in little things	59
XI.	Attention to trifling matters	59
XII.	Mistaken judgments as to salvation	60

CHAPTER II. On Charity the Root and Foundation of all Virtue.

§ I.	Charity, the test of holiness	62
II.	Charity in trifles	63
III.	Charity before all things	64
IV.	The miracles of love	65
V.	Of the benefit of vows	66
VI.	Wherein true love consists	66
VII.	The love of complaisance	67
VIII.	The love of benevolence	68
IX.	Desire for Divine Love the best means of spiritual progress	69
X.	Holy longings	70
XI.	The true signs of holy love	71
XII.	The fear of God, and its close union with pure love	72
XIII.	The measure of love of God	73
XIV.	The purity of Francis' own love of God	74
XV.	Francis de Sales' motto: "Ou mourir, ou aimer"	75

CHAPTER III. On Purity of Intention.

PAGE

§ I. We must cast aside earthly longings . . . 77
II. What it is to walk in a Spirit of Faith . . . 77
III. Self-love, and love of self 78
IV. God's Glory the ultimate end of man's salvation . 80
V. How to supply the lack of intention in good works . 81

CHAPTER IV. On Conformity to God's Will.

§ I. Nothing can happen to us save through God's Will . 83
II. Self-abandonment in God's Hands . . . 84
III. A saying of Tauler 85
IV. Evenness of mind 86
V. Resignation, holy indifference, and simple waiting on God's Will 86
VI. Inward peace amid trials 87
VII. Calmness in danger 88
VIII. Calm amid storm 90
IX. Waiting on the Lord amid troubles . . . 90
X. Rest in God amid earthly losses . . . 91
XI. God our Refuge in calumny 92
XII. Resignation in illness 92
XIII. Perfect resignation knows no exceptions . . 94
XIV. The Bishop's calmness in sickness . . . 95

CHAPTER V. On Patience.

§ I. Impatient murmurs 97
II. Complaint a sign of impatience . . . 98
III. The Bishop checks M. de Belley's complaints . 99
IV. A similar rebuke 100
V. M. de Belley complains again 102
VI. How to make a good use of unjust accusations . 105
VII. An instance of the Bishop's own patience . . 106
VIII. The Bishop's forbearance 107
IX. How to encounter calumny 109
X. Patience under misrepresentation . . . 110
XI. Francis de Sales' favourite beatitude . . . 112
XII. Patience in sickness 112
XIII. Concerning long illnesses 114
XIV. The Bishop's reverence for the sick . . . 115
XV. His own patience in sickness 116

CHAPTER VI. On Humility.

§			PAGE
	I.	Signs of progress in holiness	117
	II.	Different kinds of humility	118
	III.	Characteristics of true humility	119
	IV.	All grace, and chiefly humility, must be hidden	121
	V.	It is well to conceal our graces	122
	VI.	How to use imperfections	123
	VII.	Mistrust of self	124
	VIII.	True mistrust of self must be founded on true confidence in God	125
	IX.	Humble words	126
	X.	How Francis dealt with false humility	127
	XI.	Self-excusing	128
	XII.	Memory and judgment	129
	XIII.	Indifference to being well thought of	130
	XIV.	A good reputation	131
	XV.	Vanity	133
	XVI.	Early authorship	134
	XVII.	The Bishop's humility	135
	XVIII.	S. Bernard	135
	XIX.	Boasting to be shunned	136
	XX.	M. de Belley asks to be called his son	136
	XXI.	The "Introduction"	137
	XXII.	How Francis accepted slander	138
	XXIII.	Indifference to unjust blame	139
	XXIV.	The Bishop's ready way of meeting accusations	140
	XXV.	The Bishop's submissive spirit	142
	XXVI.	Francis's opinion as to sitting for his picture	143

CHAPTER VII. On Christian Poverty.

§			PAGE
	I.	Poor in spirit	144
	II.	The Bishop's love for poverty	145
	III.	The Bishop's ring	147
	IV.	Superfluities	147
	V.	Desires must be limited	149
	VI.	What a "sufficiency" is	150
	VII.	"I know both how to abound and suffer need"	150
	VIII.	Seneca and the Gospel	151
	IX.	The spirit of poverty amid riches, and of magnificence amid poverty	152

PAGE

§ X. Scruples 152
XI. Monseigneur Grimaldi 153

CHAPTER VIII. On Mortification.

I. The spirit of penitence 154
II. Mortification 155
III. Dangers of prosperity 156
IV. Benefit of troubles 157
V. Mortification of natural inclinations . . . 158
VI. Chastity of the heart 158
VII. A dying life 159
VIII. Inward purity 159
IX. Victory over the passions 161
X. Fasting 162
XI. Indiscreet austerity 163
XII. "Eat such things as are set before you" . . 164
XIII. How Francis concealed his self-denial . . 165
XIV. Ibid. 166

CHAPTER IX. On Chastity.

I. Chastity 167
II. Ibid. 167
III. Reticence of the eyes 168

CHAPTER X. On Charity towards our Neighbour.

§ I. How to love our neighbour in God . . . 170
II. This supernatural love is rare . . . 171
III. The Bishop's gentleness 172
IV. Ibid. 173
V. Forbearance 174
VI. The power of gentleness 175
VII. The Bishop's gentleness towards his dependents . 175
VIII. Ibid. 177
IX. The Bishop's story of a colleague . . . 177
X. The Bishop's special liking for innkeepers . 178
XI. His love for the poor 179
XII. His generosity 180

PAGE

§ XIII. His sympathy 180
XIV. How to bear our neighbour's burden . . 181
XV. Importunity 182
XVI. Reproof 183
XVII. How to test the charity of our reproofs . . 184
XVIII. Ibid. 185
XIX. Loving rebuke a proof of friendship . . 186
XX. Rash judgments 187
XXI. Think no evil 188
XXII. The Bishop's ingenuity in excusing others . 189
XXIII. Holiness better than learning . . . 190
XXIV. The Bishop's hopefulness concerning sinners . 190
XXV. Love of our enemies 192
XXVI. A mother's mercy 192
XXVII. Dislikes 193
XXVIII. Reconciliation 195
XXIX. The outer show of goodwill . . . 195
XXX. Justice 197
XXXI. Justice and judicature 197

CHAPTER XI. On Recreation and Society.

§ I. How Francis used everything as a means to draw nearer to God 199
II. The Bishop's "sad time" 201
III. Society and conversation 202
IV. Fraternal correction 203
V. Our words 204
VI. Taciturnity 204
VII. How to speak of God 205
VIII. Evil speaking 206
IX. Charity in words 206
X. Contradiction 207
XI. Ridicule 208
XII. The Bishop's playfulness 209
XIII. A playful rebuke 210
XIV. Sincerity 210
XV. Falsehood 211
XVI. Equivocation 211
XVII. Duplicity 212
XVIII. Prudence and simplicity 213
XIX. The Bishop's dislike for politics . . . 214

CHAPTER XII. On Temptations.

§			PAGE
	I.	Temptation in general	216
	II.	Counsels concerning temptation	217
	III.	Trifling temptations	218
	IV.	How to rise after a fall	219
	V.	Discouragement	220
	VI.	Patience towards oneself	221
	VII.	Speculative minds	223
	VIII.	"The just man falleth seven times"	224
	IX.	Anxiety as to our state of grace	225
	X.	Hope and fear	226
	XI.	The signs of sanctifying grace	226
	XII.	Francis de Sales' own mental trials	227
	XIII.	Sensible devotion	228
	XIV.	How to accept spiritual dryness	229
	XV.	Ibid.	231
	XVI.	The use of inward trials	231
	XVII.	Inward consolations	232
	XVIII.	Discontent with one's actual condition	233
	XIX.	Joy and sadness	234
	XX.	Natural fear	234

PART III.

On Ecclesiastical Perfection and the Duties of the Ministry.

CHAPTER I. On the Excellence and the Obligations of the Ministry in General, and the Episcopate in Particular.

§			
	I.	Francis de Sales' appointment to the See of Geneva	236
	II.	He refuses the Archbishopric of Paris	237
	III.	He refuses a pension offered by the King	237
	IV.	His wish for retirement	238
	V.	The danger of high positions	239
	VI.	Francis' views as to ecclesiastical dignity	239
	VII.	Obedience as practised by Superiors	241

		PAGE
§ VIII.	"Did the Apostles go about in carriages?"	242
IX.	The Bishop's indifference to worldly goods	244
X.	Characteristics of true zeal	245
XI.	Francis' zeal for souls	246
XII.	The episcopal spirit	246
XIII.	He tranquillises M. de Belley's fears	247
XIV.	The episcopal charge	248
XV.	The difficulties of the pastoral office	249
XVI.	Temptations to discouragement	251
XVII.	God bears His servant's burden	252
XVIII.	Bishop Camus's wish to resign	254
XIX.	Francis' answer to a Bishop who wished to abandon his charge	254
XX.	S. Federigo Borromeo	256
XXI.	Men must not shrink from the duties of their ministry	259
XXII.	Francis' old tutor the Abbé Déage	260
XXIII.	Precautions as to women's visits	262
XXIV.	Francis sought by women	263

CHAPTER II. ON THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS.

§ I.	Daily celebration	265
II.	Preparation and thanksgiving	266
III.	The Bishop's readiness to receive little offerings	268
IV.	Diversity in direction	269
V.	Encouragement to the penitent	270
VI.	The Bishop's dealings with a despairing criminal	271
VII.	Francis' dealings with penitents	273
VIII.	The Bishop's tenderness	274
IX.	His dealings with the sick	275
X.	His dealings with the dying	276

CHAPTER III. ON PREACHING.

§ I.	Importance of frequent preaching	279
II.	Francis' zeal in preaching	280
III.	Francis' readiness to preach	281
IV.	Francis de Sales' preaching in Paris	282
V.	Object of preaching	283

		PAGE
§ VI.	Indifference to the world's opinion	284
VII.	Saying and doing	285
VIII.	Good preaching known by its fruits	286
IX.	Fine words and barren results	287
X.	Magniloquence	288
XI.	The Bishop of Belley makes amends	290
XII.	The Bishop of Belley seeks to imitate Francis de Sales	291
XIII.	Ill-timed praise	293
XIV.	How to use Holy Scripture in preaching	294
XV.	Short sermons	295
XVI.	The right length of sermons	295
XVII.	Small congregations	296
XVIII.	Scolding the absent	297
XIX.	Incident in Annecy Cathedral	298

CHAPTER IV. On Ecclesiastical Administration.

§ I.	The first duty of a Bishop is vigilance	300
II.	"All for love"	301
III.	The Bishop's treatment of erring ecclesiastics	302
IV.	The power of gentleness	303
V.	Conversion of a sinful priest	304
VI.	Competition for benefices	305
VII.	Difficulties of administration	306
VIII.	The Bishop's firmness	306
IX.	Obedience to secular powers	307
X.	A Bishop's responsibility in temporal matters	308
XI.	Dispensations	311
XII.	Strictness	311
XIII.	A refusal	312

CHAPTER V. Counsels as to the Guidance of Communities.

§ I.	The Bishop's opinion of monasteries	314
II.	The active and contemplative life	314
III.	Advantages of solitude	315
IV.	The trials of solitude	318
V.	The spirit of a religious life	319
VI.	The weak to be cared for	320

PAGE

§ VII. Fitness for the religious life 320
VIII. Reform 322
IX. The value of labour 323
X. The Order of the Visitation 325
XI. Madame de Chantal 326
XII. The founder of the Visitation 327
XIII. Difficulty of finding good Superiors . . . 328
XIV. Community life 329
XV. A dying Religious 330
XVI. Government of religious houses . . . 332
XVII. Superiors 333
XVIII. Complaints of Superiors unlawful . . . 334
XIX. Superiors themselves subject 335
XX. The distractions inseparable from office . . 335
XXI. Stedfastness in vocation 337
XXII. Obedience 338
XXIII. Poverty 339
XXIV. Simplicity 340
XXV. The signs of a true vocation 341

CHAPTER VI. On Dealings with Heresy.

§ I. Francis' gift of converting heretics . . . 343
II. Controversy 343
III. How to deal with controversy in preaching . . 344
IV. Gentleness in controversy 346
V. Maréchal de Lesdiguières 347
VI. A challenge 348

THE SPIRIT OF S. FRANCIS DE SALES.

PART I.

On Religious Perfection and its Practices.

CHAPTER I.

ON PERFECTION GENERALLY.

§ I. *Charity the essence of all true perfection.*

S. FRANCIS used to say, "I hear of nothing but perfection on every side, so far as talk goes, but I see very few people who really practise it. Everybody has his own notion of perfection. One man thinks that it lies in the cut of his clothes, another in fasting, a third in almsgiving, or in frequenting the Sacraments, in meditation, in some special gift of contemplation, or in extraordinary gifts or graces;—but they are all mistaken, as it seems to me, because they confuse the means, or the results, with the cause.

"For my part, the only perfection I know is a hearty love of God, and to love one's neighbour as oneself. Without these there can be no real perfection. Charity is the only 'bond of perfectness' between Christians, the only virtue which rightly unites us to God and man. Such union is our final aim and end, and all else is mere delusion.

"No virtues, however great they seem, are worth anything, without charity;—not even such faith as

could 'remove mountains,' or 'understand all mysteries;' which has 'the gift of prophecy, or speaks with the tongue of men and of angels;' which 'bestows all its goods to feed the poor,' or endures martyrdom. All is vain without charity. He who lacketh charity is dead while he liveth, and all his works, however fair to the eye, are valueless, seen from the point of view of eternity.

"I grant that austerity, meditation, and all such practices are admirable means whereby to advance towards perfection, so long as they are carried on in and through charity. But it will not do to seek perfection in any such means—rather in the end to which they do but lead, else we shall find ourselves halting in the midst of the race, instead of reaching the goal."

§ II. *The best way to perfection is hearty love of God.*

I asked the Bishop of Geneva what one must do to attain perfection. "You must love God with all your heart," he answered, "and your neighbour as yourself."

"I did not ask wherein perfection lies," I rejoined, "but how to attain it?" "Charity," he said again; "that is both means and end, the only way by which we can reach that perfection which is in truth, after all, but charity itself. S. Paul says, 'I will show you a more excellent way;' and then he enlarges more fully upon charity. It is the life of all that is good; without charity all graces die: it is the only way to God, the only truth, the only life of the soul; for it brings us forth from the death of sin into the life of grace: it kindles faith and hope. Just as the soul is the life of the body, so charity is the life of the soul."

"I know all that," I said; "but I want to know how one is to love God with all one's heart, and one's neighbour as oneself?"

But again he answered, "We must love God with all our hearts, and our neighbour as ourselves."

"I am no further than I was," I replied; "tell me how to acquire such love."

"The best way, the shortest and easiest way of loving God with all one's heart, ... is to love Him wholly and heartily!" He would give no other answer. At last, however, the Bishop said, "There are many besides you who want me to tell them of methods, and systems, and secret ways of becoming perfect, and I can only tell them that the sole secret is a hearty love of God, and the only way of attaining that love is by loving. You learn to speak by speaking, to study by studying, to run by running, to work by working; and just so you learn to love God and man by loving. All those who think to learn in any other way deceive themselves. If you want to love God, go on loving Him more and more; never look back, press forward continually. Begin as a mere apprentice, and the very power of love will lead you on to become a master in the art. Those who have made most progress will continually press on, never believing themselves to have reached their end; for charity should go on increasing till we draw our last breath. Those who are farthest on may say with David, 'Lord, what love have I unto Thy law; all the day long is my study in it;'[1] and with the great Saint Francis, 'When shall we begin to love and serve God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves?'"

§ III. *Wherein true love of God consists.*

"I know," I said, "that Christian perfection is love, and that one must love God for Himself, and man for love of God; but I want to know what it is to love?"

[1] Ps. cxix. 97.

"Love," he answered, "is the chief passion of the heart, that which prompts us to whatever is good; and a true love of God and man implies our wishing all that is good to God for His Own Sake, and to our neighbour for love of Him."

"But," I asked, "how can we wish anything for God, Who is our sole Essential Goodness and Sovereign Good?"

"We can desire good in two ways for God," he replied; "that good which He already has, by rejoicing in that He Is, and that nothing can be added to the greatness of His Perfection;—as also that good which He has not; practically, if it is within our power to offer it,—by the will and affections, if it is not within our power."

"What possible good is there which God has not?" I rejoined.

"I was about to tell you," Francis de Sales replied. "I mean that which is called external, and which accrues to Him through the honour and worship paid by His creatures, specially those whom He has endowed with the gift of reason. If we really love God, we shall strive to render Him this service, by promoting His Glory in all we do, —not in great things only, but in trifles too; and furthermore we shall strive earnestly to lead our neighbour to love and serve Him too, so that He may everywhere and in all things receive glory and honour. If we really love our neighbour, we shall rejoice in all that he possesses that is good, so far as he turns it to God's Glory; we shall gladly render him every service which he can require at our hands; we shall be zealous for his soul's welfare, and seek to promote it as our own, because it is acceptable to God. This is true charity, real solid love of God for His Own Sake, and of man for God's Sake."

§ IV. *True devotion best practised in our natural calling.*

The Bishop used to say that the most important duty of every faithful Christian is to be continually seeking to perfect himself in his own calling; that is, to fulfil all its duties more and more perfectly. And the perfection of each individual calling lies in duly adapting means to their end—in other words, using our own special calling and its circumstances to promote that love which is the true and essential perfection of Christianity, without which all else is nought. We can only attain our great end, God's Glory, through charity. Remember S. Paul's words—"Put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness."[1] It is not only the bond which binds us to God, our Sole Perfection, but it is also the bond which knits all graces together, and unites them to their True Source, God and His Glory.

§ V. *Indiscreet devotion.*

The Bishop used to blame an error very commonly found among those who make a profession of piety—namely, seeking to cultivate virtues to which they are not specially bound by their calling and condition of life, while they neglect those which do appertain thereto. He was wont to say that this error arose from the repugnance we are so very apt to feel for anything to which duty binds us. Laxity soon creeps into a religious house when its members take no higher a standard than that which becomes secular life; and, on the other hand, if injudicious zeal and a lack of discretion attempt (as they sometimes do) to introduce customs which only befit the cloister into domestic life, the result will be confusion and annoyance. Some

[1] Col. iii. 14.

people think it a compliment to say of a family that it is "a real convent," forgetting that each tree should bear its own fruit. Of course all such religious practices are good and holy, but time, place, individual position, and circumstance must be duly weighed. Ill-regulated charity ceases to be charity:—it is a fish out of the water—a tree transplanted into a soil wherein it cannot thrive.

The Bishop compared this sort of injudicious unreasonable conduct to that of people who want to have cherries at Christmas, and ice in August, not content to take each thing in its own season. Such erratic brains are not easy to reason with.

§ VI. *True devotion is to be found in every state of life.*

One chief maxim of our dear Father was, that devotion which was in opposition to a man's rightful calling, or even was not in conformity to it, was not a genuine devotion. He went on to say that real devotion was compatible with every state of life, likening it to the liquid we pour into a vessel, which at once adapts itself to any shape.

What, then, do we mean by being devout in our own calling? We mean fulfilling every duty which it lays upon us, with fervour, diligence, energy, and cheerfulness, for the love of God, and with a view to His Honour and Glory. Ordinary duties done with fervour become religious acts; energy and brightness in their performance promote charity; and thus he who carries out this rule, is really devout in his vocation, and serves God after His Own Heart, fulfilling His Will.

S. Thomas follows S. Augustine in classing those who aim at that devotion which is the offspring of charity under three heads:—beginners, those who are progressing, and those who have learnt the way. The first division consists of such as abstain from

sin, and resist temptation, but who practise both external and internal self-denial as well as other good works with difficulty or effort. The second class of men do the same things, but more easily, with little or no effort, as they who "walk before God with a free heart." The third class consists of souls which perform the like actions gladly, and find their chief delight therein. The first of these three classes of men serve God somewhat wearily; the second serve Him briskly; the third "run in the way of His commandments, which they have loved."[1]

"Love and devotion are as much akin to each other as flame is to fire. Love is a spiritual fire, and when it bursts forth into flame, we call it devotion;—devotion only adds to the fire of love that glowing flame which makes it ready, active, and diligent, not merely in keeping God's commandments, but in obeying His heavenly inspirations and counsels."

§ VII. *It is possible to lead a saintly life in the world.*

My holy friend did not agree with such as think that it is impossible for those to lead a saintly life whose duties attach them to the court. One who has God's Grace, and strives to preserve a pure heart, need not fear; there is no position so dangerous but may be held safely under this Heavenly protection. We find Abraham among idolaters, Lot amid the grossest sinners, and Job in the land of Uz; and David and S. Louis, who knew how to sanctify a royal life amid all temptations, labours, and trials. "S. Bernard," he went on to say, "never ceased striving to advance in Divine Love: although he was occupied in the affairs of state at court and in the army of his prince, he

[1] Ps. cxix. 32, 48.

always turned everything to God's Glory. He changed his abode, but he never changed his heart, or his heart's love, or the object of that love. To use his own language, these changes did not touch him, because, however his occupations varied, it was all the same to him ; they did not affect him as light is said to affect the cameleon, but he was always united to God ; his purity was ever spotless, his love and humility ever overflowing.

"The Israelites refused to sing the songs of Zion in Babylon ; but, remember, they were not merely sojourning among the Babylonians, they were captives. If indeed a man is a slave to court favour and success, to honour and applause, then, I grant you, it is all over with him : he cannot sing the song of Divine Love ! But if it is duty which takes him to the court or camp, God keeps watch over him, and His Grace will preserve him from all contagion."

Some fish improve in flavour when they leave the sea and go up the sweeter inland waters ; and so some souls do but redouble their fervent piety when called into scenes which naturally tend to foster impurity and carelessness.

Francis de Sales certainly acted up to this himself. He held that those who are consecrated to God's service have no right to entangle themselves in worldly intrigues, and he once said to a confidential friend, "I must confess that in all that concerns negotiation and worldly affairs, I am more of a poor priest than ever, for, thank God, living at court has only taught me to be more simple and less worldly than before."

§ VIII. *True devotion avoids singularity.*

The Bishop not only objected to singularity in religious houses, calling it a very pest, but he objected also to all that is eccentric among good

people living in the world, and he used to say that through this error their piety often became not merely disagreeable, but ridiculous. He wished people to conform as far as possible to the manner of life usual among their equals, without any affectation of singularity; and he used to quote our Lord as an example, Who while on earth made Himself in all ways like unto His brethren, sin only excepted. Certainly the Bishop practised what he preached, for during the fourteen years I was under his guidance, and studying all he did—his actions, even his slightest gestures and words—I never could detect the least appearance of affectation. I will confess one trick I played him. Every year he used to come and stay with me for a week, and I used then to watch him through holes bored in the panels on purpose, so as to see what he did when alone in his own room, whether in study, prayer and meditation, writing, sitting still or moving about, going to bed or getting up, and, in short, under all those circumstances when men are wont to feel most completely free from restraint. But I never saw him change his demeanour in the slightest degree: what he was among other men, that he was when alone, and the composure and evenness of his mind were reflected in his bodily movements. He was just as dignified when by himself as in the largest assembly, and when engaged in prayer you would have supposed that he was in the presence of all the saints and angels: he was always motionless as a pillar, and his countenance most full of reverence. I used to watch whether, when alone, he crossed his legs, or leant upon his elbows, or the like; but no, he never varied in the gentle gravity of his external aspect, which inspired every one who saw him with love and reverence. He used often to tell me that our external behaviour ought to be like water, which is best when clearest and most tasteless. But free from all singularity as he was,

he was so remarkable to my mind from that very absence of singularity, that all he did was worthy of note, I think.

I have never forgotten what a great and holy man once said to me in Paris, that nothing gave him so vivid an idea of what our Lord's earthly Presence must have been among men, as to watch the angelic expression and manner of the saintly Bishop, of whom one might indeed say, not only that he had "put on the Lord Jesus Christ," but that he was filled by Him.

§ IX. *The grace of a good example.*

I cannot find words strong enough to express how our blessed Father valued the perfume of holiness, or how happy he counted those men who shed it abroad by their good example, not for their own glory, but for the Glory of their Heavenly Father, from Whom comes every good and perfect gift. Such men, who lead others along the path of the just, will assuredly shine one day as stars in His firmament. If He Who cannot err has denounced woe against those by whom offence is given to men, who can doubt that He will bless those whose lives edify their brethren, and lead souls to Him by the attraction of their piety? S. Paul says of such men, that they are "the savour of life unto life," "a sweet savour of Christ unto God."

A person who did not approve the Bishop's Order of the Visitation was speaking one day of it in his presence as a mere innovation, and at last asked, "After all, what good will this institution do to the Church?" Our saintly friend replied, very pleasantly, "It will do what the Queen of Sheba did." "And what was that?" the objector asked. "Rendering honour to One Greater than Solomon," was the answer, "and shedding abroad a sweet perfume of holiness throughout our militant Jerusalem."

CHAPTER II.

ON MENTAL PRAYER.

§ I. *The importance of frequent meditation on the Passion of our Lord.*

FRANCIS DE SALES held that there was nothing which so urges men on the path of Divine Love as meditation upon the Sufferings and Death of our Dear Lord. He used to say that it was at once the sweetest and sharpest of all pious impulses.

I asked how it combined sweetness and sharpness?

"Just as S. Paul says that 'the love of Christ constraineth us,'" he answered, "and as the Holy Spirit tells us in the Canticles that 'love is strong as death,' and 'jealousy cruel as the grave;'[1] no one will deny that love is the sweetest of all sweet things, the balm of all bitterness; yet here it is likened to that which is sharpest—death and the grave. Nothing is so strong as gentleness—nothing so gentle and loving as real strength. You can find nothing softer than oil or sweeter than honey; but if either is boiling, it burns more fiercely than any other liquid. The bee is a gentle insect till roused, and then how sharp its sting is!

"Jesus on the Cross is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and the true interpretation of Samson's riddle 'how out of the strong came forth sweetness.'[2] In His wounds we find the honeycomb of perfect love, and from this strength issues forth all our truest consolation. Of a truth, as the death of

[1] Cant. viii. 6. [2] Judg. xiv. 14.

our Blessed Redeemer was the crowning effort of His Love for us, so ought it to be the most powerful motive which draws our love to Him. It was this which made S. Bernard cry out, 'O Lord, I pray Thee that the sweet and fiery strength of Thy Crucified Love may so absorb my heart, that I may die for love of Thy love, O Redeemer of my soul, Who hast deigned to die for love of my love!'

"It was of this overflowing love which caused the Lover of our Souls to die on Calvary, that Moses and Elias talked upon Mount Tabor, in order to teach us through the glory of the Transfiguration (which was but a faint shadow of the glory which shall be hereafter) that, next to the contemplation of God's Love, there is nothing so powerful, even in the Celestial Glory itself, as the memory of Christ's Sufferings and Death. It is in memory of these that the saints and angels in Heaven ever sing the new song, 'Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and power.'" [1]

§ II. *It is not well to multiply acts of the affections in prayer.*

I once asked our dear Father if it was not well to confine oneself to a single point in meditation, drawing but one affection and one resolution therefrom?

He replied, that unity and simplicity were to be aimed at rather than multiplicity in all things, and especially in spiritual exercises, and that the recommendation to take several points in meditation applied chiefly to beginners. He illustrated this by saying that the bees make less honey amid the abundance of early spring flowers than later on, because they delight to roam about amid the general abundance, and do not pause long enough to gather

[1] Rev. v. 12.

the precious juices with which they fill their comb. "Drones," he added, "make plenty of noise, and do no work."

In answer to the question, whether it is well often to repeat the same affection and resolution, with a view to its confirmation? the Bishop said that we ought to imitate painters and sculptors, who produce their works by dint of many a stroke of the pencil or chisel: if we would form a deep impression in our hearts, we must repeat the same thing many a time. He added, that just as in swimming, those who strike out wildly are in danger of sinking, because calm, quiet movements are necessary to maintain one's balance, so in prayer, those who are eager or excited get entangled amid their imaginations, and injure themselves thereby.

§ III. *Simplicity in prayer.*

I have been asked what the Bishop meant by a saying which he attributed to S. Anthony, namely, that he who prays should be so absorbed in God as to forget that he is praying, because any consciousness of the action in which he is engaged takes off part of his attention, and if not in itself a distraction, is at least the door by which distractions may enter?

My answer is, Francis de Sales taught that we ought to keep the soul stedfast in prayer, without allowing it to dwell upon itself, or what it is doing. What satisfies and comforts us will not satisfy God's Eye, and may merely tend to feed our self-love and esteem, apart from the thought of Him. Our Lord set a little child before us as the type of perfection. Now a child takes no thought for anything so long as it is in the presence of its parents; it clings to them, without investigating their kindness or their gifts, which it accepts trustfully, and enjoys in all simplicity, without any curiosity as to their cause

or effect, love taking the place of all beside in its little mind. So he whose sole object is to please his Heavenly Lover, has neither time nor inclination for self-contemplation, but he always follows whither he is led by love.

The Bishop's approbation of simplicity was so great that he was disposed to be suspicious of what was contrary to it; and he highly esteemed the saying attributed to S. Thomas, that in order to study well, you should have but one book. Thus he approved of those who confine themselves mainly to one book of devotion as their spiritual food—as, for instance, the "Spiritual Combat," his own "dear book;" the "Méthode de servir Dieu," which I took, with his permission, as mine; the "Imitation of Jesus Christ," Grenada's "Guide," or his "Memorial," and the like. Not that the Bishop rejected other books, but he thought they should be used as accessories and commentaries to the principal book.

So as to spiritual exercises. He recommended each one to select some particular practice, and to use it above all others; whether it be the Presence of God (this he specially recommended), or purity of intention, which he highly esteemed, or submission to God's Will, or self-abandonment in God's Arms, or self-renunciation, which last he greatly commended, as embracing all true Christian perfection.

In like manner, he advised every one to select some special virtue,—humility, gentleness, patience, self-denial, prayer, loving-kindness, or the like; and to make it his particular aim. He used to say that almost all the Saints have excelled in some particular grace, and that every institution[1] had some one as its ruling spirit, to be chiefly cultivated, although, of course, in no way excluding others.

Accordingly, he did not augur well of those men

[1] Or, religious foundation

who flit about from book to book, taking up first one religious exercise and then another : he compared such persons to the drone bee which makes no honey, "always learning, yet never coming to the knowledge of the truth ; always gathering and acquiring without retaining anything, because what they gain is put into a bottomless sack, a broken cistern." Such men are mere restless beings, who do not find the good they expect from their spiritual harvest, even as jealous people, to whose malady everything serves as an addition, nothing as a cure.

He has told me that he considered a single aspiration or ejaculatory prayer, repeated a hundred times, more valuable than a hundred different prayers each used once. For confirmation of this opinion, he cited several of the Saints—*e.g.*, S. Francis, who sometimes for days and weeks together used constantly to say, "My God is my All ;" and S. Bruno, "O Goodness of God ;" and S. Teresa, "All that is not God is naught." "The longer a bee rests upon the flower, the more honey it will gather," he used to say.

Once in conversation upon this subject, the Bishop said, "Those people who at a feast taste every dish, damage their digestion and spoil their sleep ; and so it is with a soul which persists in trying every method and spiritual system ; its moral digestion is not strong enough for so much variety, and it loses that peace and calmness which Mary possessed, and which our Lord called 'the better part.'"

§ IV. *Concerning good resolutions.*

There are some who are disheartened about mental prayer, and who even go so far as to leave it off, not so much because of its difficulty, as because they do not persevere in the good resolu-

tions formed in prayer, wherefore they vainly imagine that it would be better not to form any.

The Bishop looked upon this as a very dangerous stratagem of the enemy. "People are ready enough to wait half the year for their seed to bring forth corn," he used to say, "and they expect it to be years before the pip they sow bears apples." Mental prayer must never be given up, save it be for still more important avocations, and even then its place should be supplied by frequent aspirations. Nor must we ever neglect to make resolutions, which are the real fruit of prayer. Although we may not put them in practice at once, or even should we fall away when occasion arises for their exercise, they will yet be gaining ground, and taking root in the heart, and their fruit may be brought forth hereafter, when we have forgotten all about them. Even if we did no more by such resolutions than to prove our spiritual courage, they would be acceptable to God, Who sees our every thought; it is something to learn the rudiments of war even in a mock fight, and he who runs away to-day like a coward may fight gallantly to-morrow. We must never be disheartened, but rather say with David, "In the Lord put I my trust; how say ye then to my soul, that she should flee as a bird unto the hill? Why art thou so vexed, O my soul, and why art thou so disquieted within me? O put thy trust in God."[1] The day will come when I shall serve and praise Him "Who is the help of my countenance and my God."

§ V. *Of spiritual dryness.*

A Sister complained to the Bishop of her inward desolation and dryness in prayer. Instead of consoling her, he replied: "For my part I always think dried fruits better than those which are moist; it

[1] Ps. xi. 1, and xlii. 14.

was in a barren and dry land that God called forth the water-springs, and that He showed forth His Power and Glory. Manna, that heavenly food, that bread of angels, was a mere dry little seed; but when the Israelites insisted on changing it for flesh, 'while the meat was yet in their mouths, the heavy wrath of God came upon them.'"

Few people accept what is, nevertheless, a great truth, that a faithful, upright soul is more closely and intimately united to God amid desolation and loneliness, than in sensible devotion and consolation. If the soul is engrossed by the consolations God gives, it sometimes loses sight of the Giver: those bees which make most wax are said to make the least honey.

Who can imagine a greater desolation than that of our Saviour on the Cross, which wrung from Him the cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me!" Yet who can doubt the intensity of His union with His Father's Will at that moment?—that union which is the great end of all things,—the mighty consummation which He had just proclaimed, "Consummatum est;"—in which perfect consummation He resigned His Spirit into His Father's Hands!

Blessed indeed is the soul which continues stedfast amid all that dryness and sensible desolation which is the crucible wherein the pure gold of love is refined and purified. Blessed is he who bears the proving trial patiently;—"After He hath proved me, I shall come forth as gold."

§ VI. *Necessity of combining self-denial with prayer.*

The Bishop held that mortification without prayer was a body without a soul; and prayer without mortification was a soul without a body. He protested against their being separated, saying that they should join, like Mary and Martha, in the

service of our Lord. He used to compare them to scales, one rising as the other falls. If you would lift up the spirit through prayer, you must crush down the flesh by mortification; otherwise the flesh will override the spirit, and hinder it from rising to God.

The lily and rose of prayer and contemplation do not grow and flourish save amid the thorns of self-denial and mortification. We can only approach the "hill of frankincense," which is the symbol of prayer, by means of the "mountain of myrrh," which is mortification.[1] Incense itself, the very type of prayer, does not give forth its perfume until it is burnt, and prayer without self-denial will not rise up to heaven as a sweet odour.

It is when we die to self and to selfish passions, that we live to God, and then He will feed us in prayer with the bread of life, and the manna of His inspirations.

Our blessed Father used to say on this subject, that "we ought to live in this world as though our spirit were already in Heaven, and our body in the grave;" alluding to S. Paul's words, "Our conversation is in Heaven,"[2] and the Psalmist, "Like unto them that are wounded, and lie in the grave, who are out of remembrance."[3]

[1] Cant. iv. 6. [2] Phil. iii. 20. [3] Ps. lxxxviii. 4.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE LAST THINGS.

§ I. *The fear of death.*

WE speak of those who are dead as "departed," as though to imply that they have passed from this world to a better; in truth, the time of our sojourning in the flesh, which we call life, is more truly death, since every instant we draw nearer to the grave. Thus a philosopher of old says that we die daily, and are ceaselessly tendering up some portion of our being; and Thecuitis says, "We must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again."[1]

Men have a natural horror of death: even the Saviour, in taking upon Him all the infirmities of His brethren (sin only excepted), did not exempt Himself from this fear, although to Him death was but the passage forth from earthly suffering to that glory which was His own "since the world began." An ancient writer[2] says that men ought not to shrink from death as terrible when it follows upon a good life; nothing can make it so much to be feared as that which must come after. But we are armed against all these fears of Divine Justice by the buckler of a blessed hope, which causes us to put our trust, not in any good that is ours, but solely in God's Mercy, for "none ever trusted in Him and were confounded."

True, I have been guilty of many sins; but who

[1] 2 Sam. xiv. 14. In the Vulgate the woman of Tekoah is mentioned by her name, Thecuitis.

[2] Seneca, Epis. 24.

is mad enough to suppose it possible to sin more abundantly than God can pardon? or who would dare to weigh the magnitude of any guilt against that Infinite Mercy which can drown the blackest crimes in the depths of an ocean of oblivion, if true love lead the sinner to repentance? None, save such as Cain, may say in desperation, that there is no pardon for him, "for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption, and He shall redeem Israel from all his sins."[1]

Our blessed Father once comforted one who was well nigh overwhelmed by the fear of death and judgment thus: "Of a truth," he said, "death is very terrible, but the life beyond which God promises us is no less desirable; therefore we must be of good cheer, however wretched we are. Our misery is less than His Mercy, which He has promised to all those who seek to love and hope in Him. When the saintly Cardinal Borromeo was at the point of death, he asked for a picture of the Dead Christ, that the thought of his Saviour's death might lessen the pang of his own dying. There is no remedy against the fear of death so effectual as the thought of Him Who is our life; it is well never to dwell upon the one thought unaccompanied by the other."

Doubtless the memory of past sin must fill us with fear and bitterness; but we should not stop there; rather we should go on to faith, hope, and love of God's Infinite Goodness, and by this means our most grievous bitterness will be turned into peace; our fear will be no longer servile, but rather filial; and the wormwood of self-mistrust will be sweetened by confidence in God. He who stops short in mistrust and fear, and does not push on to hope and confidence, is like a man who gathers thorns only, and leaves the roses untouched. A good surgeon never opens a vein without having

[1] Ps. cxxx. 7.

his appliances at hand to stanch the blood. "They that put their trust in the Lord shall be even as the Mount Zion, which may not be removed, but standeth fast for ever."[1]

§ II. *On long life and the wish for death.*

I said once to Francis de Sales, that considering his strong, powerful frame, his constitutional vigour, his habitual temperance, and the care he took of his health for God's service, it was likely that his would be a long life. He was then forty-two or forty-three. He, sighing, made answer, "The longest life is not the best, but that which is most devoted to the service of God." And he quoted the words: "Woe is me, that I am constrained to dwell in Mesech; my soul hath long dwelt among them that are enemies unto peace."[2]

I thought that he was grieved at being excluded from his see—his "dear Geneva," as he was wont to call it; and I said, "We have sat down by the waters of Babylon, and we have wept, remembering thee, O Sion!"

"Oh no," he answered; "it is not that temporary exile which moves me;—what can be better than this dear Annecy—this city of refuge! I meant the exile of this life; so long as we live we must needs be exiled from God and our true country; 'Oh, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'—It must be 'God through Jesus Christ our Lord!'"[3]

But surely you do ill to be so out of conceit with this life, which smiles so brightly on you," I replied. "Everything seems propitious to you; your friends love you; the very enemies of our Faith respect you, and you are the delight of all who know you well;" in a word, "Quicquid calcaveris, rosa fiet."[4]

[1] Ps. cxxv. 1.
[2] Ps. cxx. 4, 5.
[3] Rom. vii. 24, 25.
[4] Pers. Satyr. ii. 38.

"Finocchio!"[1] he exclaimed. "Those who cried 'Hosanna!' before the Son of God cried out 'Crucify Him!' but three days later. Besides, naught is so precious to me as my soul, and were I to be certified that I should continue to live as heretofore, free from sorrows, troubles, vexations, or trials, and with every enjoyment and prosperity this life can know, I should not rejoice. That which concerns time only seems very trivial to one who contemplates eternity. I always took special delight in the blessed Ignatius Loyola's saying, 'How mean and low earth seems when I contemplate the things of Heaven!'"

§ III. *On the wish to die.*

You ask whether it is lawful to wish for death, in order that we may not displease God any more? I will tell you what I have heard our dear Father say on this subject. "It is always dangerous to wish for death. We rarely find such a wish, save either in those who have attained a very high degree of perfection, or in persons of a melancholy, depressed temperament; it is not common among ordinary people like ourselves. I know that David, S. Paul, and other Saints are quoted who have wished to die; but it would be presumptuous in us, who do not possess their holiness, to appropriate their words, and we can hardly be vain enough to imagine that we are holy as they were. A wish to die out of sadness, or weariness of this life, is too much akin to despair to be safe."

"But if it is that we may cease to displease God?"

"It must be a very unusual and extraordinary hatred of sin which excites the wish. Those Saints of whom we spoke wished for death that they might enjoy God, and give Him greater glory, not merely that they might cease to offend Him. Say

[1] An old Italian expression implying unreality and exaggeration.

what you will, I do not think this is often the sole motive for desiring death; depend upon it, there will be some other reason which makes life unattractive. And after all, it is not so much the wish to glorify God which calls forth such words from the lips (if not from the heart), as a wish not to dishonour Him, and lessen His Glory by our sin. Moreover, think what does he who says such a thing look for? Does he expect to go to Paradise? But for that it is not enough that he sin not; he must do that which is good, and do it as God has appointed for him. Or does he expect to enter purgatory? I am certain that if he were to find himself on the threshold thereof, he would recall his wish, and rather ask to perfect his penitence, however severely, here."

§ IV. *The best preparation for death.*

I asked the Bishop what was the best disposition of mind in which to meet death? He answered, quietly, "Charity."

I said I knew that he who is not in charity is dead while he liveth, and that to die in the Lord is to die, if not in the act, at any rate in the habitual exercise of charity, which is "the greatest" of virtues, and the parent of them all; but I wanted to know, taking this for granted, which among the living graces springing thence are most profitable at the hour of death?

"Humility and confidence," he answered; and then, in his own graceful way, he added, "A happy deathbed must needs have charity as its mattress, but it is well to rest the head on those two pillows, humility and confidence, and to die in humble trust in God's Mercy. The first, humility, teaches us our own weakness, and makes us tremble, but with a loving fear; if it spring forth from charity (as I assume it does), it will be a brave, generous

humility, which, while it lays us low, raises us up in God, and causes us to lean solely upon Him.

"From this first pillow we turn easily to the other—confidence in God. What is such confidence but hope, strengthened by the thought of Our Heavenly Father's Infinite Goodness, which is more solicitous for our good than we ourselves. 'My God, in Thee have I trusted; I shall never be confounded.' 'They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint.'"[1]

§ V. *The memory of the departed.*

When any of the Bishop's friends or acquaintances died, he was unwearied in speaking kindly of them, and in commending them to the prayers of all around. He often said, "We do not remember our dead, our dear ones gone before, sufficiently;—we prove it by speaking so little of them. We turn away from their mention as from something gloomy, we leave the dead to bury their dead; their memory dies away with the sound of their funeral bells; and we forget that a friendship which can be cut short by death never was one truly. Holy Scripture tells us that 'love is stronger than death.'"

There is no longer any fear of flattery when we praise the dead; and while it seems almost impious to defile their good name, it is an act of loving piety to make their virtues known, and to stimulate ourselves and others to imitate them. He used to say that this one work of mercy combined all the rest:—"Do we not in some sense visit the sick when we pray for the rest and refreshment of souls which are yet waiting the perfecting of their bliss? Does not the dew of our prayers, so to say, give them meat and drink? Do we not really help to

[1] Isa. xl. 31.

set the prisoners free, and clothe the naked with a garment of light and glory? Is it not a true hospitality to promote their entrance into the Heavenly Jerusalem, to help them to become fellow citizens with the Saints? Is it not a more blessed work of mercy to help souls to enter Heaven, than to lay bodies in the ground? And surely we may liken this good work to the spiritual works of mercy in the same manner!"

§ VI. *On Purgatory.*

Francis de Sales thought that we might derive more comfort than fear from the thought of purgatory. "Most people who fear it so much," he used to say, "do so out of self-love and self-interest, rather than from thought of God;" and this he very much attributed to the habit preachers have of dwelling too exclusively on the sufferings of purgatory, to the omission of the rest and happiness which souls find therein. "No doubt that suffering is keener than anything we can know in this life, but so too are the inner consolations which those souls experience. For,—

"I. The soul is in constant union with God.

"II. It is perfectly subject to His Will, or, more correctly, its will is so transformed by God's Will that it can desire nought save what He wills, so that were Paradise open to it, such a soul would plunge into hell, sooner than appear before God until its earthly stains be purged away.

"III. The soul's purification in purgatory is wholly voluntary, and the work of love, because God wills it to be purified.

"IV. It wills to be there in such manner and as long as He pleases.

"V. It is past the power of sin, and can no longer be guilty of the slightest imperfection, or of any passing movement of impatience.

"VI. It loves God beyond itself, beyond everything, with a full, pure, disinterested love.

"VII. It is ministered to by the Angels.

"VIII. Its salvation is certain, and its hope can never be confounded.

"IX. Its bitterness of purgation is, nevertheless, a most intense peace.

"X. If there is keen suffering, still there is also a heavenly love and sweetness which makes a very Paradise—a love stronger than death or hell.

"XI. It is a state to be rather desired than feared, for its flames are all those of love and charity.

"XII. Feared only, because it is a delay in the blessed consummation of all things; *i.e.* seeing and loving God perfectly, and so seeing and loving, worshipping and glorifying Him to all Eternity. Read S. Catherine of Sienna's beautiful 'Treatise on Purgatory.'"

By his advice I have read and re-read that treatise, and always with increasing appreciation and delight; nor have I ever seen anything which satisfied my mind so thoroughly. I have given it to Protestants to read, who have been greatly touched by it; especially one very learned man, who told me that if he had come across it before his conversion, it would have done more to convince him than all the discussions he had heard on the subject.

You will say, "If it be so, why need we pray so diligently for the souls in purgatory?" But in spite of all these blessings, those souls suffer, because they are not yet in the full Presence of God, and the glory they are destined to offer to God is deferred. Therefore we may fitly ask Him to admit them into the fulness of His Rest, specially at the time when the Blessed Sacrifice is offered.

§ VII. *On the Blessedness of the Saints.*

You ask how we are to understand what S. Peter says concerning the Glory of Christ and His Sufferings, "which things the Angels desire to look into."[1] Francis de Sales shall answer. "The Blessed," he says, "so fill their souls with delight, that they seek to fill them yet fuller; they taste Divine Goodness with such exquisite keenness that they long to taste it yet more; they are satisfied, and yet they would fain eat again, and be ever more and more filled with satisfaction." Speaking of those very words of the Apostle, he says, "How are we to understand what the chief of the Apostles says of the Angels, that they desire to look upon the Lord? Of a truth they ever behold Him, and that vision is so exquisitely delicious, that while it satisfies it still fills them with ever-renewed longing. Their perfect enjoyment is not lessened by desire, nay, it is rather increased, just as their desire is not extinguished, rather quickened, by enjoyment."

"But," you reply, "how can two opposites, such as satiety and appetite, co-exist in one mind?" Of a truth, this is one of the marvels of grace and glory, and it is wholly supernatural. Our Lord has promised to those who hunger after righteousness that they shall be filled, and yet they will go on ever hungering for His Grace to be more and more abundantly poured out upon them.

"This may be," you reply, "here below, where grace may be ever increasing, but grace is perfected in the life of glory, and cannot be increased, so that any such desire seems incompatible with the fulness of happiness enjoyed by the Blessed." To this our dear Father shall reply: "The enjoyment of an ever-satisfying delight," he says, "can never fail; it rather flourishes, and is renewed day by

[1] 2 Peter i. 12.

day, always exquisite, always sought after. The never-ending content of the Blessed gives birth to an ever-satisfied desire, as the perpetual desire increases that never-ending content. The fulfilment of finite happiness puts an end to desire, and where desire yet is it cannot be perfect, because we cannot both have and long for it at the same moment; but infinite happiness combines desire with possession; possessing wherewith to satisfy all longing through the Divine Presence, as also wherewith to kindle it by the Immensity of that Presence, which inspires all who possess it with an ever-satisfied desire, and with a perpetual longing for yet further satisfaction."

Oh how wondrous is that Eternal Blessedness! "Oh how amiable are Thy dwellings, Thou Lord of Hosts! One day in Thy Courts is better than a thousand. Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, they will be alway praising Thee!"[1] "Alway," that is all Eternity. The more they praise God, the more they will long to praise Him; the more they possess the object of their desire, so much the more will they long to possess Him; the more they adore Him Whom they love, the more they will rejoice in adoring; the closer they behold Him the sight of Whom ravishes them with joy, the greater will be the intensity of that joy.

[1] Ps. lxxxiv.

CHAPTER IV.

ON INTERIOR RECOLLECTION AND ASPIRATION.

§ I. *Recollection and aspiration.*

FRANCIS DE SALES defined this as being a concentration of all our spiritual faculties within the heart, in order to commune with God Only, heart to heart. He said that this may be done in every time and place, without being affected by any occupation or any society. Such a frequent gaze upon God and ourselves, or at God in us, and ourselves in Him, is a powerful means of keeping us stedfast, and in hindering falls, or at all events in enabling us to rise up quickly if we have fallen.

Aspiration is a raising of the mind towards God; upward glances of the soul, which go straight to the Heart of God, and pierce It. Our beloved Father would have us make these two practices as constant and familiar as the breath we draw. He used to say that all spiritual exercises, without interior recollection and aspiration to God, were as bones without marrow, a sky without stars, or a tree without leaves. He taught that if we are inevitably hindered from mental or vocal prayer, the deficiency ought to be made good by more fervent recollection and more frequent aspirations; "in this way," he said, "we may make up for all that hinders us, and advance with large strides in holiness."

§ II. *On recollection.*

Our dear Father used to say that by the help of

interior recollection we took refuge with God, or we drew God unto us.

When and where may we seek to do this? Everywhere and in every place. No society, or office, or occupation need hinder it; while, on the other hand, it does not hinder or interfere with any action; on the contrary, it is the salt which seasons all our food, a sweetness which never spoils any savour. It consists simply in inward glances at God and our own soul—from self to God, from God to self; the more simple such recollection the better it is. So aspirations are short but lively upraisings of the soul to God; the more earnest and loving the better.

All such aspirations are the better for being brief. How admirable in its brevity is that favourite aspiration of S. Bruno, "O Goodness of God!" or S. Francis, "My God, my All!" or S. Augustine, "O to love, to die to self, to attain God!" These two things belong to and follow each other in our spiritual life, just as in the natural life we draw our breath and exhale it again. As we draw in the pure fresh air, and breathe forth that which is exhausted, so we draw God into the soul, and breathe forth self into the arms of His Mercy. Blessed is the soul which does thus, for it dwells in God, and He in it.

§ III. *Acts of the Presence of God.*

Francis de Sales prized this spiritual exercise so highly that he used to recommend it as our daily bread, saying that just as we eat bread with all other kinds of food, so the sense of God's Presence should be a part of all our actions. "It is the choicest work of the blessed," he was wont to say, "or rather their continual employment, as our Lord said, 'their Angels do alway behold the Face of My Father Which is in Heaven.' If the Queen of

Sheba esteemed those men happy who stood continually before Solomon, and heard his wisdom (1 Kings x. 8), how much happier are they who cease not to realise the Blessed Presence of Him upon Whom the Angels 'desire to look,' although they see Him perpetually. This is a desire which excites a constant hunger for Him Whom they contemplate; the more they gaze upon Him, the more they long after Him; ever filled with satisfaction, they yet ever crave for more." Among you, my Sisters, when gathered together for work, recreation, or any other purpose, it is the custom to appoint one whose office it is to remind all the rest of this Dear Presence; "Let all our Sisters remember the Holy Presence of God," adding, "and of our holy Communion to-day," if it be a day of general Communion among the community, such as Sundays, Thursdays, and festivals. "Most of the faults committed by good people arise from their not maintaining a sufficiently constant recollection of the Presence of God," the Bishop would say.

§ IV. *The abundant consolations with which God blessed Francis de Sales.*

He said once to a confidential friend: "If you knew how lovingly God deals with me, you would thank Him heartily, and implore Him to give me the Spirit of counsel and strength, that I may perform those works of wisdom and grace which He sets before me."

He often said the same sort of thing to me. "How gracious God must be to the pure in heart, seeing that He is so good to one like me, so wretched, so inattentive to the callings of His Grace, so earthward bent. Oh, how sweet is His Name to them that love and seek Him! Of a truth His Name is as a precious ointment poured forth! No wonder if they that are of good courage

follow Him devoutly, rejoicing in His gifts! What great things His Grace teaches us, and that with so soft a light that we are fain to wonder which is most exquisite, the brightness or the softness thereof! Sometimes I tremble lest God should have given me my share of Paradise in this life, for in truth I scarce know what adversity means. I have never felt the pressure of poverty; all my troubles have been scratches, scarcely skin deep, and sorrows which were no more than passing gusts of wind, forgotten as they passed over. Nor have I merely to thank God for trials withheld: I have been filled to overflowing with temporal and spiritual blessings, and yet amid all this I have been insensible to His Goodness and ungrateful. Oh, I intreat you, help me to thank God better, and ask Him not to give me all my white bread first!

"Truly, He knows all my misery and weakness, in that He treats me thus as a child, feeding me rather with milk than strong meat! When will He give me grace to bear the cross, which, 'if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him'?

"We must love Him or die. Rather, we must die for love of Him; die to all other love, that we may live solely to Him, and for Him Who died that we may live eternally within the embrace of His Endless Goodness.

"Oh, what a blessed thing it is to live in God; to work for God; to rejoice in God only! Henceforth, by His Grace, I will be nothing to any one, and none shall be aught to me, save in and for God only. I hope to achieve this through a fervent humiliation of my soul before Him. Dear Lord, all the world shall be as nought to me save in Thee, for and in Whom I will love the souls of men more tenderly than hitherto. When will the love of natural ties, of all that is seemly and agreeable, of all that is congenial and sympathetic, be purified

and reduced to a simple obedience of God's pure and holy Will? When will self-love cease to crave visible signs and demonstrations, and be content with the unfailing, unchanging promise of God? What can a visible presence add to the love which God has created and sustains? What sign is needed of perseverance in a union made by Him? Neither presence nor distance can add to the security of a love called into existence by God Himself."

When I heard such words as these from the lips of our dear Father, I must confess that my heart used to burn within me, like the hearts of the disciples at Emmaus; his words were, in truth, like burning coals. Oh, when shall we reach Heaven, and love Him Who has so loved us, and drawn us to Himself through His tender pity, with an endless, unchanging love, like to His Own!

CHAPTER V.

ON THE WORD OF GOD AND ON SPIRITUAL READING.

§ I. *The love of God's Word, and the results to be attained therefrom.*

FRANCIS DE SALES used to say that there was no better sign of predestination than the love of God's Word. Jesus Christ said that they are "blessed who hear the Word of God and keep it."[1] It is the test of a faithful sheep that it hear gladly the Shepherd's voice; to such one day will it be said, "Come, ye blessed of My Father."

But the Bishop was not content with mere unpractical hearing of the Word. He looked for it to bear fruit, and was wont to say that God answers our prayers in proportion to the earnestness with which we endeavour to put in practice that which He sets before us through the ambassadors of His Will. We ask Him to forgive us our trespasses, "as we forgive them that trespass against us;" and, in like manner, He is ready to grant us that which we ask of Him in prayer, if we are quick and ready to do all that He requires of us in His Word.

§ II. *How we ought to hear the Word of God.*

As natural appetite is one of the best signs of bodily health, so a spiritual appetite and relish for God's Word is a test of the soundness of our soul's health. The Saints have ever delighted in holy things, and in discoursing concerning them.

[1] Luke xi. 28.

I am disposed to think that a love for God's Word may be considered as belonging to that "hunger and thirst after righteousness" which is among the Beatitudes. He who is striving after the perfect way takes ever-increasing delight in listening to those who will teach him how to advance in the paths of righteousness, *i.e.*, the preachers of God's Word. But those who take pleasure in hearing God's Word are liable to one fault—that of personal preference, as though the bread of heavenly wisdom were not equally profitable to the soul whether God sends it by a raven or an angel; in other words, as though they might not profit equally through an unattractive preacher as through one who is attractive and agreeable to them.

You may ask why some preachers are so much more acceptable than others? It often arises less from the fault or merit of the preacher than from the faulty judgment of men, whose standard in these things is very apt to be incorrect. Of the orator's three objects—to teach, to move, and to please—a pleasure-seeking world is apt only to consider the latter, although it be the least important, and that which we should least seek after, for God will not have His ministers strive to please men, and the Apostle S. Paul says, "If I pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."[1]

Most listeners are like them of old, who bade the prophet "prophesy smooth things;" or that king of Israel who said of Micaiah, "I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil."[2] Such men like to be soothed, to hear only of pardon and mercy; they are loth to be reproved for their sins, or to have the due punishment of such sins set before them in plain words. Preachers who seek simply to teach are despised, and only such as study the attractions of rhetoric are sought after.

"I have observed," our dear Father said, "that

[1] Gal. i. 10. [2] 1 Kings xxii. 8.

if I write to any one on bad paper, and, consequently, very illegibly, he thanks me just as kindly for my letter as though it were written beautifully on the best of all possible paper. Why, save that he is not attending to the bad paper, or the bad writing, but all his thought is of me, the writer? Even so with God's Word. We should not think so much of who speaks it to us; enough that God uses the preacher as His instrument, and if God honours him by speaking to us through his mouth, how can we dare to be wanting in honour and respect for him?"

§ III. *Of spiritual reading—What books to select.*

The Bishop recommended spiritual reading as a food for the soul which is attainable at all times, and need never fail; whereas we cannot always be sure of having preachers and spiritual directors at hand, and memory will not always supply what we have heard in public or private teaching at the moment we need it. He advised us to be provided with works of piety, as so many incentives to Divine Love, and to let no day pass without using them. He would have such books read with great and respectful devotion, as so many letters sent us from Heaven by the Saints, in order to lead us thither, and strengthen us by the way. He said that there were no safer guides than the dead, who speak to us in living words. They are God's interpreters, ambassadors of His Word, distributing the bread of life to His children with the tongue, instead of the pen, and though dead they yet speak in their writings.

If we come across difficulties and obscurities, we should seek explanation from some competent person. In this manner those who are gone will aid us greatly in shaping our lives to God's service and attaining salvation.

The Bishop strongly recommended reading the

Lives of the Saints, which he called "the Gospel carried into practice." At all events such books leave a taste for holiness on the mind, if they are read with humility and a wish to imitate the Saints. Such reading is as manna, which had the flavour most acceptable to each individual taste. Among so many flowers we may be like industrious bees, and gather up the honey of a stedfast piety.

Although the workings of God's Holy Spirit are impressed on souls as diversely as the features of men's countenances, there is abundant material for imitation, and for praising God's Grace, which has wrought such marvellous things, in and by His Saints. Even if we felt nothing save admiration for their holiness, that in itself would tend to praise God and His wonder-working Grace.

§ IV. *The "Spiritual Combat."*

The Bishop greatly liked a saying which is attributed to Thomas à Kempis, the author of the Imitation: "I have sought rest everywhere, and have found it nowhere, save in a little corner, with a little book." He used to say that to read well a man should have but one book, since those who pass lightly over many spiritual books profit little. He advised everybody to select some good book, if possible to let it be small and easily carried—to read it much, and practise what it teaches more. The "Spiritual Combat" was his own favourite, his "dear book." He has often told me that he had carried it eighteen years or more in his pocket, and read some chapters, or at all events some pages, daily. He used to recommend it to all under his guidance, as most attractive and most practical. The more I read it the more I can trace in it the groundwork of all our dear Father's teaching.

§ V. *How to profit by spiritual reading.*

In order to read profitably, you must only read one book at a time, and you must read that straight through. Nor is this continuity merely the most useful plan; it is also the most agreeable, because we are refreshed, like travellers as they journey on, with a succession of new thoughts and images, which relieve and strengthen the mind. People who have no fixed plan of reading, but flit from one book to another, are apt to weary of them all, and to give up a habit which is one of the greatest enjoyments of life. The Bishop used to call spiritual reading "the oil of the lamp of prayer." Physicians say that it is wholesome to eat but of one kind of food at each meal, as an over great variety of dishes injures digestion; and I am sure spiritual physicians may say the same of reading, for a multiplicity of books is most injurious to the soul.

§ VI. *On imitation of the Saints.*

The Bishop recommended each one to read the life of such Saints as had trodden in the same path allotted to himself, or most nearly so; God having often granted to our forerunners the grace to set forth examples which we should do well to follow as nearly as may be. One day I alluded to this, telling him that he had better mind what he was about, as I never ceased to watch him, and observe all he did, with the full intention of imitating him.

"What a pity," he answered, "that friendship should be blindfold like love, and unable to distinguish between the faults and merits of the person beloved! So I must needs live with you as if I were in an enemy's country, and look upon your eyes and ears as so many spies! All the same I

am glad you have told me;—forewarned, forearmed.[1] It is an admonition to me to be heedful in all I do, inasmuch as God and man are watching me. Our enemies watch us with unkind purpose, to blame or injure us; and our friends ought to watch us with equal vigilance, although from a very different motive—that of pointing out our failures, and helping to correct them. But you are much less kind to me; you not only refuse to help me to cure my faults by friendly warnings, but you want to make me an accomplice of your faults by this unfair imitation. God has given me a very different feeling about you; I have such a jealous care for your soul, and desire so greatly to see you go on stedfastly in God's chosen ways, that I cannot tolerate even your smallest faults; the merest molehill is as a mountain to my sight, and so far from imitating them, I can assure you it requires great self-restraint when I wait for a convenient opportunity of rebuking you!"

[1] "Un homme averty en vaut deux."

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE SACRAMENTS OF PENANCE AND THE EUCHARIST.

§ I. *The importance of their frequent use.*

FRANCIS DE SALES was wont to say that these two Sacraments are as the two poles of our Christian life. By means of the first we renounce sin, uproot vice, overcome temptation, and put off the old man: by the second we put on the new man, which is Jesus Christ, and go forward in the paths of virtue and holiness, towards the "mountain of the Lord." He liked to quote a remark of S. Bernard to the effect that his monks attributed all their victories over evil, all their progress in holiness, to their frequent Communions, in which men "with joy drew water out of the wells of Salvation."[1] He often likened those who seek excuses for keeping away from Communion to the guests in the parable, who kindled the wrath of their lord, although the reasons for which they refused to come to his feast seemed plausible. "Some say that they are not good enough to come; but how are they ever to become good if they abstain from the Source of all perfection? Others say that they are too weak; but this is the Strength-giving Bread of Life;—or that they are too sickly; but here is the Physician of souls;—or that they are unworthy; but the Church bids the holiest say, 'Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof;'—or that they are cumbered with cares; but He Who is here Present has said,

[1] Isa. xii. 3.

'Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest;'—or that they fear to be condemned if they receive unworthily; let them fear lest they be condemned for staying away, or that they abstain from humility;—such humility is unreal; how can we learn rightly to receive Jesus Christ save by receiving Him, even as in the things of this world we acquire excellence by practice?"

§ II. *Holy Communion.*

The Bishop had a most tender devotion to the Holy Communion of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist; Divine Love had so moulded his heart with respect to it, that his reverent fear did not hinder his deep trust, nor did that trust lessen his holy fear. He used to say that it was impossible to seek the Saviour in any more precious, loveable, or blessed a way, than through this mystery. He would fain have us all bow down to the very dust in receiving the Holy Eucharist, even as our Saviour humbled Himself beyond measure that He might give Himself to us, stooping down from Heaven to share the depth of our humiliation. And here I will quote the Bishop's own words, spoken to one who, through a false humility, dared not approach this holy mystery, but said in S. Peter's words, though not with S. Peter's meaning, "Depart from me, O Lord!" "Tell her," the Bishop wrote to a confidential friend, "to communicate boldly, with a peaceful and humble heart, in obedience to that Bridegroom Who has vouchsafed to humble Himself to become our Food—food for us, who are in very truth ourselves but food for worms. He who communicates after His mind loses all trace of self, and can only intreat the Lord to convert him wholly into Himself. What is there that becomes more entirely part of

ourselves than the food which we consume in order to sustain life within us? And in His Love, the Saviour becomes food for us. How should not we do all that in us lies that we, on our side, may be wholly consumed by Him, so that in very truth we may 'dwell in Him, and He in us'?"

§ III. *On technical classification of good works.*

Theologians classify our works under four heads —*i.e.*, those which are living, and dead, dying, and revivified.

Living works are such as spring from the essence of life eternal, that is grace; works done in and through Love.

Dead works are such as are deficient in this principle, and are wrought in mortal sin—*i.e.*, which do not spring from love, and which, although possessing a certain natural virtue, cannot (so S. Gregory says) bring forth leaves or good fruits to God, because they are not rooted in charity.

Those works are said to be dying which were wrought in a state of grace, and had the root of life, but have since been overtaken by mortal sin, which deprived them of all life and vigour, like trees in winter, which would infallibly die, did it last perpetually. But when the spring sunshine returns to warm the earth, they put forth leaves, flowers, and fruit, and a natural resurrection brings them to a new life. Revivified works are those which were dying, but are called to new life by God's Grace; as when a man casts aside mortal sin, and re-enters the state of grace. Then all good works which had been blighted by sin revive, and resume their former verdure and life.

§ IV. *On changing one's Confessor.*

The best course, like truth itself, is generally to

be found between two extremes. It is not well either to change one's Confessor on every pretext, or to be afraid ever to make a change, and so to abstain from confession rather than go to any save one's ordinary Confessor. The first extreme implies want of steadiness, the other cowardice; and of the two the last extreme is the worse, for it involves human respect, earthly clingings, and a spirit of bondage altogether opposed to Him Who is "perfect liberty." S. Paul says that inasmuch as we are "bought with a price," even the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, it behoves us to "glorify God in our body and spirit, which are God's."[1]

The Council of Trent ordains that in religious houses there should be extraordinary Confessors admitted three or four times a year, to avoid any yoke or discomfort that might press upon the inmates through their ordinary Confessor; and in compliance with this, Francis de Sales appointed that the Sisters of the Visitation should admit some Confessor from without in each Ember Week. Moreover, he bade all Superiors take care that at all times any Sister who wished it should have recourse to a special Confessor, always supposing the wish to be reasonable, and not merely a caprice; inasmuch as while providing for all reasonable wants, mere fancies ought not to be encouraged.

S. Teresa was very careful that her Sisters should enjoy this good and holy liberty, which is consistent with Christ's light yoke; and to this day the Carmelites maintain their rights in this respect.

The Bishop wrote once to a Superior as follows: "It is not well to be capricious in changing one's Confessor without a substantial reason; but, on the other hand, neither is it well to feel bound when there is a good reason for making a change. Bishops should always leave a certain freedom to Communities in this respect, especially in cases

[1] 1 Cor. vi. 20.

where the Sisters concur in wishing for a change, or where their spiritual Father thinks it desirable."

§ V. *On scruples.*

The Bishop used to say that scruples spring from a most cunning pride. He called it cunning, because it is so subtle and so plausible that it deceives the soul which is beset by it.

He who is the victim of this disease will not submit his judgment to the most enlightened spiritual guides, but always clings to his own opinion in preference to theirs : if he would only submit and give up his own judgment, he would soon be cured and set at rest. But surely it is only reasonable that the sick man who refuses to submit to his physician's certain remedies should continue to suffer ! We should not pity a man who died of hunger and thirst while abundant means of relieving both were at his side.

The Holy Spirit tells us in the Scriptures that disobedience and stubbornness are as iniquity and idolatry ;[1] what then shall we say of those scrupulous persons who make idols of their own fancies, and are such slaves to their own opinions that they abide by them persistently, in spite of remonstrance, rejecting all that is said with a view to put away their scruples, under the excuse of being misunderstood or too indulgently treated? Scruples are indeed a serious disease, and, like jealousy, they find food in everything, remedy in nothing. May God preserve you from this trying malady, which I call nothing else than mental ague !

§ VI. *Difference between venial sin and imperfection.*

The Bishop used to say that venial sin proceeded

[1] 1 Sam. xv. 23.

from the will, as there can be no sin without the consent of the will; but imperfection is more properly a defective movement which precedes that consent. Thus to laugh inordinately and beyond the bounds of decency, regardless of the scandal given to others, is a venial fault; but to be suddenly overtaken with an inclination to laugh, and to burst forth without any deliberate intention, is an imperfection. A deliberate, impatient outbreak of anger is a venial sin; but a sudden passing cloud of temper, conquered as soon as it is perceived, is only an imperfection. Such imperfections do not stand in need of sacramental absolution, whereas venial sin generally, though not necessarily, furnishes matter for it.

CHAPTER VII.

ON DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

§ I. *Its due limits.*

HAVING been born during the octave of the Assumption, Francis de Sales had a special devotion for the Blessed Virgin, and from his early youth he conceived a very remarkable love for purity, dedicating himself to God by a life of chastity. He was consecrated on the Feast of the Conception of the Blessed Virgin, December 8. I have often heard him preach in loving words concerning her, and he used to teach his spiritual children to hold her in special love and veneration.

What is love and devotion for her but to honour her in God, and God in her, so that He is the End and Object of all such love and devotion? Otherwise we should transfer to the Blessed Virgin that worship (*latria*) which is due to God only. In the "Traité de l'Amour de Dieu" the Bishop says: "He who seeks to please God and Our Lady does well, but he who would please her as much or more than God is guilty of a grievous misconception."

A person who knew that the Bishop had taken a vow in his youth to say the rosary daily, wished to do the like; but on consulting Francis, he bade him on no account to do so.

"Why?" his friend asked, "why do you forbid others to do that which you have done yourself from your youth?"

"That is the very point," he answered. "I acted with less judgment then; but now that I am older, I say, Better not. Mind I do not say, Neglect the

rosary; on the contrary, say it daily if you will, it is an acceptable offering to God; but let it be as a habit or resolution, rather than as a vow, so that, if you should happen to omit it, there may be no sin before God. What you vow, you must fulfil, under pain of sin, and that is no trifling matter. I have often been troubled by it, and have been on the point of seeking a dispensation, or, at all events, of getting some equally important, but less inconvenient, task substituted for it."

§ II. *On Confraternities.*

The Bishop advised those who consulted him to join such Confraternities as were established in the places where they might happen to be, so as to be able to take part in the good works appertaining thereto. He used to reassure those who were afraid of committing sin, if they failed to fulfil the particular practices enjoined or recommended by such Societies. Some of the rules even in a religious house are not binding under pain of mortal or venial sin, he would say, and how much less the statutes of a Confraternity! Their recommendations are counsels, not precepts.

PART II.

On the Practice of Holiness.

CHAPTER I.

GENERAL REMARKS.

§ I. *Self-deceit.*

THERE is a common mistake made even among religious people, who fancy that they possess all those virtues the opposite characteristics of which do not obtrude in their daily life. It is marvellous how many people lull themselves to sleep upon this treacherous pillow. But really there is a wide difference between having the habit and active practice of a virtue, and having the habit of its opposing vice. A bad habit is lessened by abstaining from evildoing; but in order to acquire a good habit this is not enough, we must practise it actively and steadily.

There is no great marvel if you are gentle when nobody offends, or contradicts, or irritates you; rather the marvel would be if you were cross and ill-tempered when surrounded by deference and submission. The wildest animals can be subdued by those who are always kind to them. Some people appear very amiable so long as everything pleases them; but touch the mountain, and it will smoke, for there are fiery coals hidden beneath those ashes. It is no great thing, says S. Gregory, to act kindly towards those who are kind to us; but to be kind to the evil-disposed, to do good to our

persecutors, to be moderate and charitable to such as defame us, this indeed is to attain a height where earthly storms will scarce ruffle the soul. There are men who can depict the beauty of patience and gentleness in glowing terms, while they are perpetually murmuring, and ever ready to explode at the first jarring word spoken. Of such we may safely say that their patience is altogether superficial, and has no hold upon their heart.

Again, the Bishop says: "The virtue of strength and the strength of virtue are never to be acquired without trial, or when we are wholly free from temptation. There are some people who are most edifying in their patience so long as nothing occurs to try it, but whose conduct under any trial leads one to pronounce their forbearance to be theoretical rather than practical. It is one thing to abstain from a vice, and another to practise the opposite virtue. There are sundry men who seem to be virtuous, but whose virtue has no strength, because it has not been sought after and won. Sometimes our passions lie dormant, and unless we make use of such peaceful seasons, in order to win strength and power of resistance to evil when it shall arise, we shall be defeated when the trial comes. We should do well to be humble, and not imagine ourselves to possess a virtue because we are not conscious of committing the opposite vice."

§ II. *Natural disposition, and its use in attaining holiness.*

Francis de Sales used to say: "If you are naturally disposed to do what is right, bear in mind that such a disposition is a gift, for the good use of which you must give account. Therefore seek diligently to use it for the better serving of Him Who has given it you. Graft the shoots of heavenly love upon your own wild stock, God will

endow you with it richly if you make ready to receive it by hearty self-abnegation.

"Some people are naturally disposed to be sober, modest, charitable, humble, patient, or silent, etc., and very little attention enables them to practise what is a congenial virtue. Certain heathen philosophers were remarkable for their moral excellence, such virtue being within compass of man's natural powers, and easily confirmed by repeated exercise. Just as many manual acts depend greatly upon physical capacity and dexterity, so a well-disposed character is a great help in attaining mental excellence. But what will all mere moral proficiency profit a man, if he lose his soul? that is to say, if all that is good in him does not spring from grace and love? Without charity, the Apostle says, all moral virtue profiteth nothing."

§ III. *Inward amendment the first essential.*

The Bishop often said that for the most part grace was like to nature rather than art, which works externally, as in painting or sculpture, whereas nature works from within. The heart is said to be the first member vivified, and the last to die, in man.

When leading souls in the path of perfection, and preparing them to quit the world, Francis de Sales did not dwell upon external matters of dress, appearance, or the like; he aimed at the heart of others with all his own heart, knowing well that, having once gained that stronghold, all else would follow. "When the house is on fire," he used to say, "men are ready to throw everything out of the window: when the heart is full of God's true Love, men are sure to count all else as worthless."

Some one expressed surprise because a lady of high rank and devoted piety, who was under the Bishop's direction, wore earrings. "I really do not know even if she has got ears," he answered; "she

always comes to confession covered with a veil or hood, which conceals her dress. Moreover I do not suppose that Rebecca, who was no less good a woman, forfeited any holiness by wearing the earrings which Eliezer gave her from Isaac."

The same lady was accused to the Bishop of vanity, because she wore a cross of diamonds. "It is a most edifying vanity," he replied; "I would that all our earthly crosses might be covered with diamonds and precious stones, for what else is that but to spoil the Egyptians for God's service, and to glory in the Cross of Christ? What fitter use can you find for jewels than to adorn the Standard of our redemption?"

§ IV. *Progress consists less in doing much than in doing a little well.*

Above all things our blessed Father urged people to avoid hurry, which he called the chief enemy of true devotion.

"It is better," he used to say, "to do little, but that little well, than to undertake a great deal, and do it imperfectly. Perfection is not attained through the multitude of our works, but by the purity and fervour of intention with which they are performed."

He taught:—I. That spiritual progress depends less upon doing a great deal, than upon the spirit of fervent love which prompts what is done. II. That one good work fervently performed is more acceptable in God's Sight than many done in a languid or slovenly way. III. That the merit of any good work depends greatly upon the purity of intention with which it is performed; the value of any action is proved by its end, and the purer and more holy that end, so much more real the faith which excites it. But what more fitting end and aim can there be to all our actions than God's Glory?

In like manner, the Bishop used to say that we ought to strive to make our familiar conversation "little and good." And he often urged people to undertake less, but to give good heed that what they did undertake might be done with the greatest attainable perfection. "Soon enough, if well enough," was his favourite saying.[1]

§ V. *Natural impetuosity to be resisted.*

Francis de Sales was a sworn enemy to all natural impetuosity, which he was wont to call the plague of true devotion. The fervour of real devotion is calm and restful, whereas mere natural fervour is an ill-regulated, noisy effervescence, which really destroys that which it makes believe to build up.

There was no unseemly haste which he condemned more than the attempt to do several things at once; a habit which he likened to trying to thread several needles at the same time. He who tries to do two things at once will not succeed in either.

Whatever he undertook himself, he did with his whole mind and energy, as if nothing else concerned him for the time, and as if it were the last thing he had to do in this world. Sometimes he would spend precious hours with troublesome people, who consumed his valuable time with very trifling matters; but in answer to any remonstrance he would say: "These trifles are great to them, and they need to be helped accordingly. God knows that I am not fit for greater works. All occupations are alike to me, so long as they are done to serve God; and while I am engaged in such small matters, I am not called upon to do greater things. Is not God's Will a sufficiently great undertaking at any time? Be sure that

[1] "Assez tôt, si assez bon." "Sat cito si sat bene."

little things become great if they are done with a fervent desire to please God. He weighs our service, not by its own merits, but by the love with which it is offered; that love by its purity; and that purity by its singleness of purpose."

§ VI. *Hurry a foe to holiness.*

Our dear Father had a great respect for the old imperial motto, "Festina lente" ("Make haste slowly"); as also for the saying, "Soon enough, if well enough." His favourite words were, "Little, but good," and he continually warned people against supposing that perfection is to be found in a multiplicity of religious exercises, whether internal or external. If one questioned this as contrary to that insatiable love of which the masters of the spiritual life tell us—a love which never says "enough," which never counts itself to have attained, but is ever reaching forward to greater heights, he would reply: "You must grow in this love by means of the root, rather than the branches;" explaining himself to mean that a multitude of spiritual exercises, imperfectly done, often superfluous, or not to the purpose, resemble the useless tendrils of a vine, which must be pruned away if it is to bear good grapes; whereas the real life or root is nourished and strengthened by a few good works very carefully performed; that is to say, done in a spirit of very fervent love of God, wherein all true Christian perfection consists. This is what the Apostle means when he speaks of being "rooted and built up in Christ," if we would attain the "full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ, in Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."[1] Some may reply, Is it possible to do too much for God? Ought we not rather to

[1] Col. ii. 2, 3, 7.

work while it is day, before the night of death comes, in which no man can work? Are we not bound to do all that we possibly can while we have the time?

"Most true, most worthy of heed all such truths are; but, nevertheless, they are in no way contrary to the wise maxim, that it is better to do few things well and perfectly, than a great many imperfectly. What do you mean by doing a good work perfectly? (Of course I mean good works done in a state of grace, as otherwise they would not only be imperfect, but useless as regards eternity.) Such actions must be done—1st, with great ardour; 2nd, with great earnestness; and 3rd, with great purity of intention. Well, then, one such action is better than a number done, 1st, coldly; 2nd, irresolutely; and 3rd, without that purity of intention. Real progress towards perfection depends less upon multiplying spiritual exercises, than upon increased fervour, renewed vigour, and a purer love of God in all our common actions. A little thing done with earnest, true, pure love is far more acceptable to God, and promotes His Glory better, than some great undertaking wherein our love is cold, languid, and wanting in singleness of purpose."

The Bishop illustrated this one day by the following instance: "Not long since," he said, "some good Religious applied to me to know what fresh devout practice they should undertake. 'Last year,' they said, 'we fasted and took the discipline three days in the week; what shall we do now, as we fain would do somewhat more this year, both as a thanksgiving to God, and with a view to our progress in His paths?' 'It is true that we must always strive to advance therein,' I answered, 'but you are mistaken in supposing that your progress depends upon the multitude of your religious exercises. It depends much more upon the degree of perfection with which they are performed, and upon your increase in mistrust of self, and confi-

dence in God. Last year you fasted and took the discipline three days in the week; if you want to double your religious exercises this year, they will fill the whole week, but what will you do next year? You will want nine days in the week, or you must make out two fasts in each day! You can see the folly of those who fritter away their time wishing that they were martyrs in India, while they neglect the ordinary duties of their calling! But there is another class of persons who deceive themselves greatly by trying to eat more than they can digest. You have not sufficient spiritual vigour to digest all that you undertake with a view to perfection, and yet you are unwilling to set aside the restlessness which prompts you to seek to do great things.'"

§ VII. *Of the virtues to be specially preferred.*

I. The Bishop always gave a preference to such as were most ordinary, and in most frequent request, rather than to such as were rarely called for in real life.

II. He held that the true supernatural importance of a good action could not be measured by its outward show, because what appears to be a very trivial act may be performed with great love and grace, while something far more showy to the world's eye may be deficient in that Love of God which is the only real test and standard of worth in His Sight.

III. He held the most general virtues to be the noblest. Thus, he preferred prayer, which is the light of all good works; devotion, which consecrates all we do to God's service; humility, which makes us have lowly thoughts of self and our own works; gentleness, which yields to every one; patience, which endures all things, to magnanimity, liberality, magnificence, or the like, which have a less widespread influence.

IV. He was somewhat suspicious of very conspicuous good works, because, he said, they tend to feed vain-glory, which is the most fatal poison to all grace and virtue.

V. He blamed those who measure good works according to their popular estimation, which he considered to be a very false standard of such matters. Such men prefer temporal almsgiving to that which is spiritual, he would say; they hold fasting, hair shirts, and bodily mortification to be more precious than meekness, modesty, and mortification of the heart, which, nevertheless, are infinitely more profitable.

VI. He always rebuked those persons who seek rather to practise such virtues as are to their mind, than such as specially concern their duty and calling; people who strive to serve God after their own fashion, not according to His Will—an abuse, by the way, sadly too common, even among really good men.

§ VIII. *Of little virtues.*

Richly endowed as our dear Father was with great virtues, he always had a special love for virtue in little things. I mean, such as seem small to man's sight, for nothing is small when seen in the light of God's Grace.

"Everybody wants to attain to conspicuous and shining virtues," he said; "they would fain hoist their graces to the summit of the Cross, that they may be beheld and admired from afar. But very few seek after the lowly graces, the thyme and sweet herbs which grow beneath the shadow of the Life-giving Tree. Yet these are the sweetest and nearest to the Precious Blood of our Saviour, Whose first precept is, 'Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart!' It is not every one that has the opportunity of practising great things—

courage, magnanimity, magnificence, martyrdom, constancy to the death. Such occasions are rare, yet men aspire to them, because they are glowing and attractive, and we are apt to fancy that we should be capable of them, and to indulge visionary opinions of our own excellence, until the trial comes, when we speedily stumble and fall.

"We rarely meet with an opportunity of making a great fortune; but it is possible to earn pennies or farthings daily, and he who deals wisely with his small gains will become rich by degrees. We might accumulate great spiritual riches, and lay up an abundant treasure in Heaven, if we would but use all the trifling opportunities which meet us at every turn for the service of God. The mere performance of a good deed is not enough, unless it be done in a spirit of love. Love alone gives substance, weight, worth, and merit to our good works in God's Sight, and a trifling good action, done for love of Him, is worth far more than some great thing in which that love has a smaller share. A cup of cold water given for love of Him will not lose its reward,[1] and Jesus Christ gave the preference to a poor widow's offering of two mites, given for love's sake, over the large gifts cast into God's Treasury by rich men. People are apt to think slightingly of trifling acts of forbearance towards an ill-tempered neighbour, patient endurance of his imperfections, meekness under angry looks, willing acceptance of contempt and humiliation, petty injustice, preference shown to another, ridicule, or troublesome importunity. A ready performance of tasks beneath our ordinary position, a pleasant answer given to undeserved or petulant reproof, composure under derision, the power of taking a refusal gracefully, or receiving a favour thankfully, self-humiliation before equals or inferiors, uniform justice and kindness to dependants,

[1] Matt. x. 42.

all these are counted as very small virtues by the high-minded and proud at heart. We would fain seek only such showy, fashionable virtue as will win the praise of men, forgetting that he who pleases man is not the true servant of God, and that the friendship of the world is enmity with God."

§ IX. *Magdalene at the foot of the Cross.*

The Bishop had a special reverence for the picture of the penitent Magdalene kneeling before the Cross ; sometimes saying that it was as a whole library of books to him. One day he was looking at a painting of this subject in my house at Belley, when he exclaimed, "Oh, what a thrice-blessed exchange this penitent soul made ! She poured out her tears upon Jesus' Feet, and from those very Feet His Blood was shed forth upon her, to cleanse her from all her sins !" He went on to say, how watchfully we ought to cultivate the little virtues which grow beneath the foot of the Cross, inasmuch as they are watered with the Very Blood of the Son of God !

I asked what virtues he meant ?

"Humility, patience, gentleness, kindness, forbearance, indulgence, calmness, good temper, heartiness, pity, ready forgiveness, simplicity, frankness, and the like," he replied. "Such virtues are like violets growing in a shady nook, fed by the dew of Heaven, and, though unseen, shedding forth a sweet and precious odour."

"What else can we find at the top of the Cross itself ?" I asked.

"Plenty," he answered ; "there you will find bright, shining graces, if they are performed in the spirit of love—such as prudence, justice, magnificence, zeal, liberality, almsgiving, strength, charity, bodily mortification, obedience, contemplation, constancy, contempt of riches and honours, and the

like. Men are keener after such virtues, because they win esteem and praise; but in truth we ought only to value them in so far as we can please God by their means, and find fresh ways of proving our love for Him therein."

§ X. *Of faithfulness in little things.*

One of the Bishop's maxims was, that real faithfulness to God is shown in little matters. "He who is watchful over his *deniers* and *liards* will be still more so with respect to crowns and pistoles," he would say. Certainly Francis practised what he preached; for he was the most precise man I ever knew. He was not only minutely particular and correct in every ceremony, however trifling, at the altar or in choir, or in public offices, but he was equally so in his private devotions. It was the same in his social habits; he never omitted anything. One day I complained that he paid me too much respect. "Do you forget our Lord Jesus Christ Whom I honour in you, His servant?" my saintly friend replied. He used to urge me specially to study all such matters as concerns the Bishop's office and duty. "Such among Christ's Pastors as are the salt of the earth, and the light of the world, are bound to set forth the best example in all things," he often said; and he was fond of quoting S. Paul's words, "Let all things be done decently and in order."

§ XI. *Attention to trifling matters.*

A person who was playing at a game of skill before the Bishop, cheated his adversary. Francis could not tolerate this, and pointed out the fault. He answered promptly, "Oh! but we are only playing for *liards!*" "What would you do if you were playing for pistoles?" Francis asked gravely.

"He who is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much; and he who would not appropriate a pin, will not steal crown-pieces."

One day I went to see the Bishop of Geneva, and, as the sun was fierce, I arrived overcome with heat. I was complaining of the excessive warmth, when Francis asked me, laughingly, if I should like a fire. "What do you mean?" I asked; "do you want to roast me entirely?"

He replied, in jest, that a fire warmed those who were chilly, and tempered the heat to others. But, after a moment's thought, he said very frankly, "To say the truth, that is not what I mean. But I have so often heard you complain of the cold, and say that you never could be too warm, that I was laughing at your excessive complaints of heat, and wanted to remind you of what you sometimes say, that it is better to melt than freeze, and that a fire is always a good thing. So you see I did not quite mean what I said."

Francis very often used to repeat that real faithfulness towards God consists in avoiding the smallest faults; it is often easier to avoid great faults, because they carry their own warning with them.

§ XII. *Mistaken judgments as to salvation.*

"The children of men are deceitful on the weights," King David says, and that because their natural vanity deceives them. The guilty man who seeks to shut his eyes to the fear of God, tells himself that God is too good to heed the faults of men who are compassed with infirmity, whose natural tendency is to fall into sin, without any natural inclination to retrace their steps. There are others worse still, who say that the Lord either does not see, or does not heed what they do. On the other hand, scrupulous persons fall into the

opposite extreme, and represent God as armed with thunderbolts, delighting to punish His creatures. They fear everything, and do not consider that God's Mercy is more powerful than His Justice, that it exceeds all His other attributes, and that in His greatest wrath "He remembers mercy."

Francis often directed both his public and private teaching to this point, saying that those who are so confirmed in sin as to give no heed to attain salvation, do too much, or too little. Too much, if they believe in Hell;—self-love might surely warn them not to heap up vengeance against themselves. Even the most wicked men abstain from some sins they would fain commit, were it not for fear of temporal punishment. Too little, if they have cast aside all belief in everlasting punishment, and have totally extinguished the light of faith in their heart. But as for those who do care for their salvation, and say, "I would attain to it," most of these, Francis said, assume too much or too little in another way. They assume too much when they are careless and indulge a notion that there is no need to be so strict or so precise in order to win salvation, and that God, Who is so rich in mercy, will easily remit their ten thousand talents owing. Too little, when they give but scant heed to that which is right, and that even so carelessly and imperfectly that it is mere child's play. How few, he would add, even among those who profess to lead a devout life, really keep eternal life before their eyes, and perform every action with a sincere aim to promote the Glory of God!

CHAPTER II.

ON CHARITY—THE ROOT AND FOUNDATION OF ALL VIRTUE.

§ I. *Charity, the test of holiness.*

OUR dear Father invariably maintained as a rule that the Love of God was the one thing which gives worth to all our works. Our actions are not like a piece of gold, which is valuable in proportion to its weight; they may be more fitly measured as a flame of fire, which is purest in proportion as it becomes less material.

Some people measure the worth of good actions only by their natural qualities or their difficulty, giving the preference solely to what is conspicuous or brilliant. Such men forget that Christian virtues, which are God's inspiration, should be viewed from the side of grace, not that of nature. The dignity or difficulty of a good action certainly affects what is technically called its accidental worth, but all essential worth must come from love alone.

Certain persons found fault with the Congregation founded by the saintly Bishop, on the ground that it was too indulgent and too easy. To such criticisms he made no answer, save that "he who loves most will be most loved, and he who is most loved will receive most glory; love wins the prize," according to the inspired words of the Apostle, who says that neither faith, almsgiving, nor martyrdom itself, can profit the soul, without charity, which is the very bond of perfectness, binding together and confirming all other graces.

§ II. *Charity in trifles.*

Just as prudence is the test of all true acquired moral virtues, so charity is the test of true spiritual virtues, inspired by God's Grace. The first is ruled by the mere uprightness of human reason; the last by Divine Reason, which is nothing else save God's Will, the Ruler of all sanctified wills, and the Source of all true reason. This is the doctrine taught by the Angelic Doctor, and followed by all theologians. Oh, if Christians would but try all their actions by this standard, we should see a very different degree of holiness to that which now prevails, and spurious charity would cease to usurp the place of that which is real!

Little things done in a spirit of fervent love are infinitely more precious than much greater works done with less of love. Francis de Sales said: "I know that little troubles are often more vexatious than greater matters, because of their multiplicity and their importunate pressure, just as home trials are harder to bear than such as come from without; but I know, too, that victory over these is often more acceptable to God than many things which seem more important to the world's sight." And he always measured good actions by the love of God which prompted them, rather than by their natural excellence. The following words, written concerning prayer, embody his views as regarded all virtues:—"We ought to love prayer," he says, "but we must do so for love of God. It follows that he who does this will only wish to attain such enjoyment from it as God wills him to have, and that is measured by obedience." So, again, teaching Théotime concerning obedience, the Bishop says:[1] "Most assuredly, loving we obey, as in obeying we love; but if such obedience is excellent and amiable,

[1] "Traité de l'Amour de Dieu."

it is because it tends to perfect love, and its perfection depends rather upon the fact that while obeying we love, than because loving we obey. Thus just as God is alike the Final End and First Source of all that is good, so Love is the beginning of all good emotions, as also their final end and perfection.

"S. Peter says: 'Above all things have perfect charity among yourselves, for charity shall cover a multitude of sins.'[1] Let us all live according to this Divine rule: 'If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth; that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to Whom be praise and glory for ever and ever. Amen.'"

§ III. *Charity before all things.*

Apart from this love, Francis de Sales counted all good works as a mere useless heap of stones. He was continually urging upon all around him the Apostolic precept, "Let all your things be done with charity."[2] Nor was he ever weary of repeating the words of S. Paul, that without charity, the greatest gifts of prophecy, of knowledge, yea, of faith even to a martyr's death, are unprofitable. Many a time he has said to me that we could not press this truth too urgently upon the faithful souls committed to our teaching. "What avails it to run the race if we reach not the goal?" he would say. "And how many good works are rendered useless as regards our salvation for want of this motive power! Yet people think so little of it, as though intention were not the very life of all our actions, and as though God's rewards could be given to works which were not done for His Sake or His Glory." "Salvation," he said, "is held out to the eye of faith; it is prepared for hope, but it is given to Love alone.

[1] 1 Pet. iv. 8. [2] 1 Cor. xvi. 14.

Faith is like the pillar of fire and cloud which led the way to the promised land. Hope feeds us with its gracious manna, but Love is like the Ark of the Covenant, which brings us to the Heavenly Home promised to the true Israelite—a home where we shall no longer need the pillar of faith to lead us, or the manna of hope to sustain us. The architect carries on his work with rule and measure continually in his hand, and even so we who would build the walls of the Heavenly Jerusalem, of which we ourselves are the living stones, must ever cleave to the rule and line of Charity, doing everything for God; as the Apostle says, 'Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God.'"

§ IV. *The miracles of love.*

S. Bernard was gifted by God with a great gift of miraculous power, but he counted that of much less importance than crucifying his flesh with all its lusts, and esteemed it more profitable to subdue his mind and will than to raise the dead.

Our dear Father was of the same mind, and when any one told him of some good work done in and for Love, he was wont to call it a miracle of grace. Miracles, he said, are God's work, in which He permits the ordinary laws of nature to be set aside; and a good work done by and in us, through the power of supernatural Grace, is in truth a miraculous operation thereof. "One ounce of sanctifying grace" (he used to say) "is worth more than a hundredweight of those graces which theologians call 'gratuitous,' among which is the gift of miracles. It is possible to receive such gifts and yet be in mortal sin; nor are they necessary to salvation; but he to whom the smallest degree of justifying grace has been granted cannot be lost. As a rule, the graces which are technically called 'gratuitous'

are given to men less for their own benefit than for their neighbours' edification; whereas justifying and sanctifying grace is given by God's Holy Spirit, in order to mould its possessor to the true likeness of the children of God."

§ V. *Of the benefit of vows.*

The Angelic Doctor says that fasting—*e.g.*, when done in obedience to a vow—is more profitable to perfection than when it is practised without any such restraint; and that—

1st. Because a vow is of great religious worth as among moral virtues, and of far more excellence than fasting; consequently, the merit of the religious act adds to the profit and value of a fast.

2nd. Because he who fasts in obedience to a vow offers not merely the fruit of fasting, but the very tree and root itself—*i.e.*, his will—which is fixed and governed by his vow.

3rd. Because that vow which binds the act of fasting with a stringent law, confirms and strengthens the will, and makes it firmer and more faithful in practice.

4th. Because one good thing added to another necessarily strengthens both.

Nevertheless, he who fasts without any vow, but for earnest love's sake, does better than he whose fast is kept in obedience to a vow, but without love; for love it is which gives any worth to men's deeds in God's Sight. Let all such as perform any good works in obedience to vows give heed that they be done in and for love, lest they lose all recompense and reward.

§ VI. *Wherein true love consists.*

Francis de Sales taught that it consists in realizing God's Presence and His Will in all things.

The strongest possible proof that we are in a state of Grace is, if we have no will contrary to that of God; for if we have any such, we are most assuredly preferring some creature to God, and it follows that we have no true love, which ceases to exist where it does not reign supreme. We must not merely love God better than all else; we must not put any other love in competition with Him. S. Augustine says that he who loves aught save in and for God, that is in subjection to Him, and for His Sake, does not love God rightly. I do not say that we may not love creatures as well as God; He has commanded us to love our neighbour as ourselves; but so soon as we love anything as much, or more than God, such affection becomes incompatible with His true Love, which causes the proportion between our Creator and His creatures to be as widely different as the sun and stars in magnitude, in a heart which really loves Him.

§ VII. *The love of complaisance.*

True delight (or complaisance) in God must be rooted and grounded in love; it must have love for its motive power—the only disinterested motive being love which refers all things to God and His Glory, and seeks solely to be what God wills it to be. If we would that God should take pleasure in us, we must find our greatest happiness in the thought that He is God, and that His Goodness is All-Powerful and Infinite.

Francis de Sales says: "The soul which has attained this love of complaisance cries out perpetually amid its sacred silence, 'Enough for me that God is God, that His Goodness is Infinite, His Perfection boundless. Whether I live or die, it matters not, since the Beloved of my soul lives and triumphs eternally.' Death itself cannot overshadow the heart which knows that its Sovereign

Love lives. The loving soul asks no more than that He Whom it loves far better than itself should be filled with everlasting blessings ; for such a soul lives more truly in Him than in itself ; rather it is not that soul which lives, but her Beloved Who lives in her."

Thus true delight in God is to rejoice in God for God's Sake ; to take pleasure in His pleasure, without any thought, save as to what is acceptable to Him. By this means we unite our satisfaction to that of God, and so we mould the loving complaisance in God for His Own Sake at which we aim.

§ VIII. *The love of benevolence.*

We must consider the Kingdom of God under two kinds—interior and exterior. The first is God Himself, for His Sovereignty cannot be separated from His Essence, any more than His other Perfections. Now, inasmuch as this Kingdom is Infinite, it cannot be added to by any service or honour we may render to it, neither can it be diminished by our sin or rebellion. Secondly, we find God's Kingdom belonging to Him, yet not in Him, but in His creatures, just as a monarch's possessions are truly his, although they are stored away in his treasury. This external kingdom consists in the honour, obedience, service, and homage which all creation owes and renders to God, every one of His creatures being predestined to set forward His Glory as the sole end of their existence. Herein we have, by God's Grace, the power of enlarging His Kingdom, and of adding to His Eternal Glory, as of lessening it through our sins. It is with respect to this external kingdom that we can exercise the "love of benevolence," if we perform every good work with a view to His Glory, and with intention to bless, glorify, and exalt Him in all we

do ; while in a similar way we abstain from every fault which can militate against that Glory.

Nor does the love of benevolence stop there. Inasmuch as charity constrains us to love our neighbour as ourselves, we must do all that lies within us to incite him to promote God's Glory likewise, even as the Prophet says, "O come and magnify the Lord with me." S. Paul teaches us that the same ardent love constrains us to hinder whatever offences our neighbour may commit against God, and to oppose all that can displease His Goodness. This is what we call zeal ; such zeal as David says "consumed" him, "because mine enemies have forgotten Thy words." [1]

It has been asked whether this love of benevolence cannot go yet further, and reach God's Infinite Interior Kingdom, which is Himself? I answer in Francis de Sales' words, that we may exercise such love by rejoicing in all that God is and has. Moreover, we may rejoice to think that nothing can possibly be added to His Infinite and Incomprehensible Greatness and Perfection. "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts. Heaven and earth are full of Thy Glory : Glory be to Thee, O God Most High. Amen."

§ IX. *Desire for Divine Love the best means of spiritual progress.*

Even as love amid all affections is the foremost and noblest fruit of the will, so desire is the foremost result of love. Love implies that we desire to possess that good thing which we love, whether absent or present. Desire is love of an absent good ; joy is love of one that is present. He who delights to love delights also in longing for that which he loves ; and the more we love that which we desire, the more we desire to love it. Desire

[1] Ps. cxix. 139.

for the love of God is a great means of attaining that love, and to those who love Him the desire for greater, better love is an admirable stimulus and means for advancing in it. This is "the desire of the poor" which the Lord hears so gladly,[1] that "preparation of the heart" which finds so ready an access to His Ear; this it is which won for His chosen servant Daniel the name of "a man of desires."[2] He who loves earnestly longs earnestly; he who longs earnestly will seek earnestly; he who seeks earnestly is sure to find; and he who finds grace finds life and salvation in the Lord. The holy Bishop used to say on this subject: "We ought to ask nothing so urgently as a pure, holy love for our Saviour. Oh, how we ought to long after this love, and love this longing! Surely reason itself teaches us to long after increasing love of that which can never be sufficiently loved, and to desire that which can never be sufficiently desired!"

§ X. *Holy longings.*

Our dear Father thought much of holy longings, and used to say that the whole progress of our spiritual life depended upon their being rightly used.

He who would advance rapidly in that Divine Love wherein all perfection lies must be ever filled with an earnest desire for greater love. It is in this spirit that the great Apostle tells us that, "forgetting those things which are behind, reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize;" "not counting myself to have apprehended;"[3] because in spiritual things and in Divine Love nothing is enough, nothing suffices, save an ever-increasing desire.

[1] Ps. x. 17.

[2] In the Vulgate, "Daniel, vir desideriorum;" in the English version, "a man greatly beloved."—Dan. x. 11.

[3] Phil. iii. 13, 14.

Love, however great, may continually grow greater in this life, because it can never be fully satisfied and perfected save in heaven. How Francis delighted in S. Bernard's saying, "Amo quia amo, amo ut amem" ("I love God because I love Him; I love that I may love more!"). Assuredly he does not love God enough who does not desire to love Him far better! A true lover of God is not content to love Him with all his heart, inasmuch as "God is greater than our hearts," and he would fain have a larger heart wherewith to love God more.

§ XI. *The true signs of holy love.*

One of the striking things I remember to have heard our dear Father say was: "The truest sign that we love God Only in all things is when we love Him equally in them all. He is always the Same, and the inequalities of our love spring from our earthly attachments to something that is not of Him." I should like to write this sentence on the walls of your houses and in all the books you read, so that it might be ever present to you and your habitual practice.

This is the touchstone by which to prove whether our love and devotion are true or false. Of a truth, if our ark once attained this point, it would be like that of Noah, "lift up above the earth"[1] even to the heights of sanctification. Then all would come alike to us; life and death, sickness and health, poverty and riches. All such changes and chances of life may cause our frail bark to tremble, but they cannot shipwreck it while we keep the helm clear and straight; while we see that all these things are in God's Hand, Who is no less loving in His Chastenings than in His Blessings; His Justice and Mercy are alike Good and Compassionate. We

[1] Gen. vii. 17.

feel that His Chastening Hand is like that of the surgeon, who hurts in order to cure our body; we know that the thunderbolt will turn to soft rain, refreshing the tender herb. He has said: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

It was in this spirit that the great Apostle exclaimed: "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the Love of God, which is in Christ Jesus."[1]

§ XII. *The fear of God, and its close union with pure love.*

We may augur well of that innocence which is keenly alive to fear. Holy fear is a very rampart and fortress to purity, and King Solomon's words, "Happy is the man that feareth alway,"[2] are specially applicable in this case. S. Jerome says, that the hardest of all those strifes to which the Christian is called is that of chastity; the conflict arises more frequently than any other, and victory is more rare. He who trusts in himself because he has hitherto been kept pure runs a great risk lest he fall. And if fear is necessary to chastity, it is no less necessary that we should possess a chaste fear, in order that we may "work out our salvation in fear and trembling."

I asked the Bishop what he meant by a chaste fear? He answered me by quoting the Psalm: "Timor Domini sanctus, permanens in sæculum sæculi."[3] This holy fear springs from love of God, and is maintained by love—a love which leads us to think more of the interests of God than of our

[1] Rom. viii. 38, 39.
[2] Prov. xxviii. 14.
[3] Ps. xix. 9. In the English version it is rendered, "The fear of the Lord is clean, and endureth for ever."

own, and so to fear offending Him more than we fear punishment. If we fear to offend God because He is so Good, rather than because He is the God of Vengeance, our fear will be chaste and pure, even as that of a loving wife, who dreads nothing so much as in any way to displease her husband, because of her love for him, and her delight in his love. In a word, pure and holy fear is full of reverence, love, and respect; free from all that is servile and mercenary, filial and meet for the Saints.

Sometimes, indeed, servile fear may prepare an entrance for love into the soul. Thus, S. Augustine likens it to the needle which carries gold or silver thread. But there is a form of servile fear which avoids evil solely from dread of punishment, and he who knows no higher restraint than this would readily commit the sin to which he is tempted, if he were not afraid of its penalty.

It is one thing to say, "I abstain from sin because I fear the punishment which will follow upon my sin," and another to say, "I only abstain from sin because it is followed by punishment." The first is not wrong, the second is. Practically, he who says that says, "I should not mind displeasing God, were it not for the inevitable chastisement which will follow."

Francis was earnest in his commendation of that filial fear which springs from love, and he was fond of repeating the saying, "We must fear God out of love, not love Him out of fear."

§ XIII. *The measure of love of God.*

You ask what is the measure to our love of God? I answer, with S. Bernard, that its only measure is to be measureless. He Whom we love is Infinite; therefore, our love can know no bounds.

Francis de Sales held those to be cowardly and

half-hearted who sought to put a limit upon love, and measured out their necessary duties as though they could grasp or confine God's Holy Spirit. "God is greater than our heart;" who dare seek to limit His working? The Love of Christ knew no bound or limit. Shame upon us if we are content to love Him by rule and measure! If earth and fire are never satisfied, never say, "It is enough,"[1] how much less holy love, which is "stronger than death, and its fire a most vehement flame."

"It is impossible," Francis said, "to remain long stationary. He who does not win loses; he who does not rise higher upon the ladder must go down; he who is not a conqueror must be conquered in this struggle. We are surrounded by foes, and unless we fight, we must perish. But if we fight we are sure to succeed, and if we succeed we shall win a glorious victory, and receive our crown of triumph."

S. Bernard says that not to go onwards is to go backwards. We are perpetually navigating a stormy sea, and the force of the current carries him away who ceases to use his oars.

§ XIV. *The purity of Francis' own love of God.*

Every action, aim, and intention of the holy Bishop was directed by the pure Love of God, wherein truly lies all true Christian perfection, whether in this life or the next. "May it please the Infinite Goodness of God that His Love may be our only love," he wrote. "Oh, when will it absorb us and our whole life, so that we may die wholly to self, and live solely to Him! To Him Alone be all honour, glory, and blessing."

One day, in a season of special openness and confidence, he said to one whom he trusted: "Of a

[1] Prov. xxx. 15, 16.

truth, if I knew that there was one single spark of affection in my soul which is not of God, in God, and for God, I would cast it out forthwith, for I would rather not exist at all than fail to be His solely and unreservedly. If I knew any part of my being to be devoid of the mark of Jesus Christ, I would tear it forth, even as we are told by Himself to cut off the offending right hand or foot."

Nor was the saintly Bishop simply indifferent to all that was not God, in, for, and through Him Only; he abhorred all that is not God's, taking as his standard our Master's words, "He that is not with Me is against Me." Hence he used frequently to say, that in order to grow in the love of God, we must grow in longing desires for Him; and to do this heartily, we must be more and more weaned from all earthly desires.

§ XV. *Francis de Sales' motto: "Ou mourir, ou aimer."*

S. Teresa took for her motto: "To suffer or die." That faithful servant of Christ Crucified was so firmly bound to the Cross by Divine Love, that she counted her life dear only in so far as she might have grace to suffer for His Love. So also the seraphic S. Francis, who bemoaned himself lovingly when he had passed some few days without suffering, lest God had forgotten him, calling poverty his mistress, and suffering his sister. Our saintly Father used to say that while suffering, borne in and with the love of God, is the very road and gate of Heaven, it is nothing short of a premature hell without that love. Death is a bitter thing without the Saviour's Love; and love itself were bitter without His Death, inasmuch as that Precious Death has won that Heavenly Love for us, without which neither our works nor sufferings could ever win eternal life. The dear Bishop had taken for his motto: "OU MOURIR, OU

AIMER."[1] He paraphrases it thus: "Die to all other love, in order to live to Jesus' Love, and so not to die eternally, but live in Thy Everlasting Love, O Saviour of our souls, for ever to sing the song of the blessed. Hail Jesus, Whom I love, Who lives and reigns world without end. Amen." And again: "I would either love God or die. Death or love. Life without that love is infinitely more terrible than death."

[1] Death, or Love.

CHAPTER III.

ON PURITY OF INTENTION.

§ I. *We must cast aside earthly longings.*

WE are surrounded by earthly desires and heavenly longings. The latter cannot be too numerous; they are as so many wings which raise us up to God, even as the "wings of a dove," which David craved for that he might fly away and be at rest. But of earthly longings, longings after the fleeting joys and gifts of this life, we cannot have too few. S. Augustine compares them to the birdlime which hinders our spiritual flight.

Francis de Sales was marvellously free from all such earthly desires. "I wish for but few things," he said, "and I do not wish eagerly for those. I have scarcely any longings; were I to begin life again, I would fain have none." Earth is but a poor place; or rather it is nothing at all to those who aim at Heaven. Time is no more than the shadow which points to Eternity.

§ II. *What it is to walk in a Spirit of Faith.*

I have been asked what our saintly Father means, when he says that "We must walk before God according to the Spirit of Faith"? He meant that we must rule our lives not by the maxims of human reason, nor the likings of flesh and blood, but by the precepts which our Heavenly Father has revealed to us. He meant that we must seek Jesus Christ as the Wise Men from the East sought Him, by the leading of a star.

Yet more ;—to walk in the Spirit of Faith implies not merely walking by the light of faith, but in the glowing warmth of holy love, which is the life and soul of faith. It is to walk like Abraham in the light of the dayspring from on high. It is not believing only—it is DOING. But those who follow the dim light of earthly wisdom and human reason, are as travellers in the night, treading, unawares, upon the brink of a precipice. For instance, the light of human wisdom leads us to hate our enemies ; that of Faith bids us love them. The one says, "Avenge thyself;" the other says, "Forgive, as thou wouldst be forgiven." Earthly prudence incites us to heap up riches ; it whispers that wealth is happiness, to want for nothing a supreme blessing. Faith replies : "Not so ; blessed rather are the people who have the Lord for their God. Go sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor. Charge them who are rich in this world that they be ready to give. Set not your heart upon riches. Let him that taketh away thy coat have thy cloke also. The love of money is the root of all evil."

Earthly wisdom pronounces a blow to be an intolerable insult ; Faith bids us offer the other cheek to him that smote us, and counts it an honour to suffer shame for Christ's Sake. Day is not farther from night, nor light from darkness, than the Spirit of Faith and its teaching from that of the world and its wisdom.

§ III. *Self-love and love of self.*

These are not one and the same thing, for while all self love is a love of self, all love of self is not necessarily self-love.

Self love is always evil ; no act of sin, whether great or small, is free from it ; that is to say, from a voluntary preference given to self or some creature, as opposed to the Will of our Creator.

"Self-love," says S. Augustine, "built the city of Babylon, whose walls are encompassed with contempt and hatred for God." But love of self is not like this; it is enjoined upon us, and cannot but be good. We are bound to love ourselves in and for God, seeking and obtaining for ourselves, so far as in us lies, the good things of nature, as well as those of grace and glory.

But then clearly love of self may be natural or supernatural. It is natural with respect to the good things of nature, and of this the Apostle says that "No man hateth his own flesh;" nor is this love, when rightly regulated, displeasing to God, Who is the Author of nature as well as of grace. But this love of self becomes supernatural when it stretches forth after the good things of grace and glory, which are superior to all those which are merely natural.

Such supernatural love of self may be stimulated by hope or by charity. In the first case it is a self-interested love, because we love God as our own Sovereign Good, not as the One Sovereign Good in and for Himself, which is the love of charity. This last is a purely disinterested love, which loves God for and in Himself, and ourselves in and for Him, with reference solely to His Glory.

A lawful love of self, whether natural or the supernatural love of hope, if not always referred to God, is at least capable of always being referred to Him; but the love of holy charity is not merely capable of being so referred, it is intrinsically dependent upon God, whether habitually, virtually, or actually. "The Saviour, Who redeemed us with His Blood, desires with an Infinite Desire that we should love Him in order that we may be saved; and He would have us saved that we may love Him to all Eternity. Thus this love sets forward our salvation, and our salvation His love."

The true measure of salvation has respect not

merely to the glory God has prepared for us in Heaven, but to that which we shall contribute to His own Glory in proportion to His Gift. They err who, in reference to eternal salvation, dwell only on their own gain and self-interest, that is the glory they hope to receive from God, forgetting that which they are to render to Him; a glory which is the first and last end for which He created Paradise; whereas our glory is but as a means to that end. He only will glorify God in Heaven who receives glory of God, in order to render it again to its Source.

§ IV. *God's Glory the ultimate end of man's salvation.*

I have been asked to explain Francis de Sales' words: "That which we do for our own salvation is done for God's Service, inasmuch as the one work of the Saviour in this world was man's salvation." He who serves God solely with a view to his own reward, even to Paradise itself, does not seek God's Glory above all else. Ask the majority of Christians why they are performing good works, and they will tell you that it is with a view to salvation. But push the question home; ask why they desire so earnestly to attain that salvation, and the mouth, speaking out of the heart's abundance, will tell you honestly that their chief object is to win those good things which they count upon in everlasting blessedness. Speak to them of setting forth God's Glory therein, and you will find that it is but a secondary thought.

But, nevertheless, the final end for which God has made Paradise and all else is His Own Glory, not theirs, which last is but the means whereby to attain the former object. The Prophet knew this full well when, speaking of celestial blessedness, and of their happiness who have attained thereto, he gave as its

source, not the delights of Paradise, but the endless praises offered up there to God by those who enter therein. So then it is true that all we do with a view to our own salvation is done for God's Service so long as we count His Glory to be the ultimate end of that salvation. It is also true that the one work our Saviour wrought in this world was primarily our salvation, but He referred that ultimately to His Father's Glory, saying that He came not to bear witness to Himself, but to the Father, and confirming this with the affirmation, "If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true;" *i.e.*, His Glory were as naught unless the Glory of God were its ultimate end. It is according to this that we must understand the Creed when it says that Jesus Christ "for us men and for our salvation came down from Heaven, and was Incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made Man, and was crucified." The words "for us men" must not be taken as though we and our salvation were the ultimate end of His Incarnation and Passion rather than the Glory of God

§ V. *How to supply the lack of intention in good works.*

It has been asked whether, when a good work has been done without any definite intention, the deficiency can be made up afterwards?

Our holy Bishop says on this point: "If from a mere mechanical habit the external action has preceded the interior action, let the inward affection follow as soon as may be. If I do outward homage to my Superior, without having paid a tribute of inward respect by the intention of submitting myself to him, I must follow up the outward sign with the inward intention. Nor do I see why by constant care we may not rectify our want of intention, inasmuch as by the penitence which follows upon a

fault we can regain God's Grace and wipe away the offence. If a spirit of compunction and contrition has such power to blot out sin, so that where sin abounded grace should much more abound, why may not the spirit of grace turn that which was good into something better, and raise that good work towards Heaven which was grovelling on the earth for want of a higher intention? If we can straighten crooked bars by the help of material fire, why may not the fire of holy love serve to rectify the imperfect intention of man's heart?

CHAPTER IV.

ON CONFORMITY TO GOD'S WILL.

§ I. *Nothing can happen to us save through God's Will.*

FRANCIS DE SALES habitually looked upon everything as depending upon God's Most Holy Will, and he taught others to do the same. "Nothing can happen to us, save sin," he used to say, "but what is of God's Will, whether it be good or evil. Good, for He is the Source of all good; 'Every good and perfect gift comes from the Father of Light.' Evil, for 'shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?'[1] Of course this is to be understood in the sense of suffering, for God cannot will sin, although He permits it while He leaves men to exercise that free will with which He has gifted them. Moreover, we cannot say correctly that sin *happens* to us; all that so 'happens' must come from without; whereas sin comes from within, and is, as the Word of God tells us, the offspring of our own heart. Blessed indeed were we if we habitually received everything as from His Fatherly Hand, Who openeth it and filleth the whole earth with plenteousness. How our troubles would be soothed! What honey we should win out of the rock, and oil from the stony land! What holy moderation would bless our bright seasons if we ever remembered that both adversity and prosperity are sent to promote God's Glory and our own salvation! Let us dwell upon this truth, and see naught save God in every event, looking at all

[1] Amos iii. 6.

that happens to us through Him, so that in everything we may honour 'God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who comforteth us in all our tribulation.'"[1]

§ II. *Self-abandonment in God's Hands.*

Whether we will or no, we cannot escape from God, or from His Sight and government. What safer course, then, can we pursue than to do that which is inevitable with a free and loving spirit, unhesitatingly committing all that concerns us in this world or the next into His Hands?

All that our saintly Father wrote was full of this self-abandonment, which he held to be the summary of Evangelic perfection, *i.e.*, self-renunciation for the Love of God. He continually reminded us that all such renunciation must be in and for the Love of God, as without this living, reigning Love not even he who gives all he has to the poor, or his body to be burned, profiteth anything. At best such self-renunciation is equivalent to that of those heathen philosophers who forsook all things for love of earthly wisdom.

"Self-renunciation and resignation of the soul into God's Hands," the Bishop said, "is, after all, neither more nor less than stripping off and casting away our own will in order to offer it to God, for it would be of little avail to renounce and forsake self unless we are perfectly united to His Eternal Goodness." How is this union, this chief fruit and main result of all self-renunciation, to be attained? By perfect submission and conformity of our will to that of God, whether it be specially signified to us, or whether we simply wait for its indication. In the first case we unite our will to His by resignation or indifference; in the second, by calm expectation; so that a perfectly resigned soul does

[1] 2 Cor. i. 3, 4.

not merely will whatever God wills, but however He may will it. Such a man's heart is like soft wax, ready to receive every impression which it may please God to stamp on it. It is in this way that we put our will to death (not that we ever give up the exercise of free will, for it is God's Will that we should use that, and conform it to the perfect liberty of the children of God). Francis said that directly a soul which has given itself up to God's good pleasure becomes conscious of any individual will in itself, it makes haste to extinguish it in God's Will, just as at sunrise you may see the light of the stars melt away, so to speak, into the brightness of the glorious sunshine.

§ III. *A saying of Tauler.*

The Bishop was fond of quoting a saying which Tauler records of the pious peasant who became his master in the spiritual life, by God's Grace. He was asked where he had found God? and his answer was, "There, where I left myself; and wheresoever I found myself, there I lost God." It is the old story of the rival cities, Babylon and Jerusalem—self-love preferred before God; or love of God in preference to self—the first built up Babylon, which reaches even to hatred of God; the second raises up Jerusalem, and that involves hatred of self.

If sin is practically a turning from the Creator to the creature, who but must see that when we are changed by grace, it does but turn us away from the creature to the Creator? And this is what our Lord taught us when He said that no man can serve two masters—God and Mammon; and there can be no friendship between light and darkness, between Jesus Christ and Belial.

The true life of a Christian is to die to self and selfish passions, in order that we may live to Jesus

Christ; but to die to Him in order that we may live to self and passion, is the sure road to eternal death. "If ye live after the flesh," says S. Paul, "ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." [1]

§ IV. *Evenness of mind.*

There were few things which our blessed Father inculcated more diligently than a holy evenness of mind. He used to liken this life to a ship steering towards the Haven of salvation, saying that we must be good pilots, and keep the helm straight, however heavy the storm. To this end we must not forget to keep our eyes fixed on the guiding compass; and what is the Christian's magnet save God's Holy Will, on which we must ever fix our eyes? All the disturbances to which our minds are subject, do but arise because we, poor frail creatures that we are, do not turn our every glance to God, and consequently, amid the sundry changes and chances of life, our tempers and inclinations change too. But whoever will ponder the endless diversity in perfect uniformity of God's Holy Will, and how He allots prosperity and adversity, sickness and health, riches and poverty, life and death, to His creatures, remembering that amid all these we may find occasion to give Him Glory; such an one, indeed, will attain to that enviable spirit of Christian indifference, from whence a holy evenness of mind proceeds.

§ V. *Resignation, holy indifference, and simple waiting on God's Will.*

"Resignation is exercised," the Bishop said, "by means of an effort of submission. You would rather live than die; nevertheless, since it has

[1] Rom. viii. 13.

pleased God that you should die, you submit. You wish it had pleased God rather that you should live; you accept death willingly, but you would yet more willingly live. Holy indifference goes a step higher; it loves naught, save what is God's Will, and so nothing can move the heart from its tranquil attitude in the Presence of that Will. Now, both resignation and holy indifference have respect to God's Will as indicated by some event or other, although diversely, inasmuch as resignation submits with an effort, holy indifference without any effort. But simple waiting on God's Will is a yet higher thing, for that accepts a Will which has not been declared, and it leads us to acquiesce beforehand in whatever God may will, however hidden and unknown to us it may be.

§ VI. *Inward peace amid trials.*

Some most excellent pious people make the great mistake of supposing that it is not possible to maintain inward peace amid external disturbance. What can be more ceaselessly restless than the sea? No vessel resting on its bosom is ever still for a moment, and yet we eat and sleep, as usual, on board ship, and the compass-needle never fails to point steadily to the North. He who refers every action to God, and has no aim, save His Glory, will find rest everywhere, even amid the most violent commotions; and that because he will encounter those very disturbances with a view to His Honour Who sends or permits them, and in so doing he attains his one great end—namely, to give God the glory in all things, and everywhere.

I have wondered sometimes to hear men who have dedicated themselves to God complaining because they are called to very active duties, which they call *great distractions*. Surely no occupation is really distracting, save such as separates us from

God, and that nothing save sin can do. No lawful occupation separates us from Him; on the contrary, it is a means for closer union. Lawyers, merchants, artisans, soldiers, every kind of calling may turn their work to God's Glory amid the most stirring life. "Let us give ourselves wholly to God amid the endless worries entailed upon us by worldly matters. What better opportunity for proving our fidelity than amid such contradictions? Alas! solitude has its trials, as the world its worries. Go where we may, we must be brave at heart, for God's help is ever ready for all who trust in Him—for all who seek His Fatherly Guidance humbly and meekly. Beware of letting your carefulness degenerate into anxiety and distrust. While your frail bark tosses amid the winds and waves of earthly trial, fix your eyes on Heaven, and say, 'Lord, I would do all for Thee; be Thou my Pilot and my Guide;' and comfort yourself with the thought that, the Haven once attained, all your past toil will be forgotten amid the sweetness of that Rest. And whatever the hindrances may be, we are making straight for that Haven, so long as we maintain an upright heart, a good intention, a firm courage, and a stedfast gaze upon God, putting all our trust in Him. What if at times the violence of the storm threatens to overwhelm us for a brief space? We must not be surprised; rather let us hasten to start afresh with new energy. You will keep stedfast to your good resolutions, and not be discomposed by the earthly worries which may become means of strengthening you in grace. True holiness is not best attained amid freedom from interior trials, any more than good fish is found in stagnant marshes."

§ VII. *Calmness in danger.*

Stoic indifference is a delusion, and that because

in this mortal life it is impossible to lay aside that which is an essential part of human nature—the impressions and emotions of earthly passions. The highest attainment of practical philosophy is to regulate them, and subject them to the control of reason.

A certain Stoic who was at sea during a violent storm gave way to his terror even more evidently than his companions, who made no profession of philosophy. The danger past, they taunted him with this forgetfulness of his tenets ; and the Stoic could find no better excuse, forsooth, than that he trembled for a good man's life (in his humility he meant himself) ; whereas for those around, who were less good, death was not to be dreaded ! Whereupon one of his companions told the philosopher that as he counted himself to be a good man, he should have feared nothing, as the Elysian Fields would be his portion after death ; whereas those whom he held to be wicked had reason to dread that punishment which awaits the bad in another life.

In truth, there is a certain natural fear which in itself is unimportant, and to which very good people may be liable. Thus S. Thomas Aquinas, with all his learning and holiness, feared thunder and lightning with an excessive shrinking. On all occasions when assailed by this terror he used to comfort himself with the sacred words, "The Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us."

Thunderstorms amid the Alps are frequent and formidable, but Francis was as calm and unmoved amid the most violent storm as at any other time. Once he wrote : "Last night we had a tremendous storm, and I was glad to see our people invoking the Name of Jesus, and making the sign of the Cross. 'Ah !' I said, 'we should not have thought so much of the Lord without this fright.' I was really glad of it, though the storm shook one to

pieces." "A pure heart is a perpetual feast," and nothing can take away his joy and hope who rests upon the Saviour's Breast. "Blessed is the man whom Thou choosest and receivest unto Thee; he shall dwell in Thy court, and shall be satisfied with the pleasures of Thy House."[1]

§ VIII. *Calm amid storm.*

It is easy to steer the ship when wind and sea are still, but storm and tempest try the pilot's skill. Commonplace minds go on and thrive so long as all is smooth before them, but real virtue is tested by difficulty.

The more Francis was contradicted, the calmer he grew; the fiercer the storm which swept over him, so much deeper he cast the anchor of his faith. Like Samson, he found honey in the lion's jaw; he knew how to win peace amid war, the moist whistling wind in the fiery furnace, joy amid earth's bitternesses. Every storm served to carry him nearer the port; his enemies set forward his salvation, and, Jonah-like, the very monsters which sought to swallow him up became a refuge to him. "For some time past," he wrote, "all the secret contradictions and thwartings which have beset me seem to turn to an overflowing peace, which leads me to hope that my soul will soon be fixed in God; and of a truth, that is not only the great, but the sole desire and ambition I possess."

§ IX. *Waiting on the Lord amid troubles.*

To wait on the Lord is to possess a tranquil mind which knows how to remain in an attitude of joyful hope until such time as it may please Him to fulfil His promises. It is this joyful hope which gives such rest and peace to the souls in purgatory,

[1] Ps. lxv. 4.

so that they cannot murmur or be impatient, or entertain the slightest wish contrary to God's Will.

He who would win this hope must possess a firm, manly courage, free from all indolence and effeminacy. The Prophet Isaiah says that those "that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint."[1] To wait on the Lord is to bear whatever trials God may send with a strong courage which "hopes against hope;" a firm resolution capable of saying with holy Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."

§ X. *Rest in God amid earthly losses.*

A man of high position and large fortune, who had made great profession of religion, was completely ruined. He was wholly overwhelmed, and in his distress gave way to murmurs against God, as though Providence had forgotten him. Francis de Sales tried to raise his thoughts from earth to Heaven, and finally asked the sufferer whether God was not more to him than all other possessions, and whether, having loved the Lord while he had much, he was not ready to love Him, having nothing?

The ruined man answered that such words were very well in theory, but not in practice; easier to say than to carry out.

"Of a truth," Francis rejoined, "he is very covetous to whom God will not suffice!"

This remark touched his friend's heart, and moved him to softening tears, the more that he had always had a special horror of covetousness.

[1] Isa. xl. 31.

§ XI. *God our Refuge in calumny.*

The Bishop used to say that when we strive to justify ourselves before men, it is for the most part but a poor, feeble justification; but when we leave it all to God, He will do it clearly, openly, and thoroughly. Sooner or later, He always defends the innocent; and those who trust in Him will never be confounded. "My help cometh of God, Who preserveth them that are true of heart." "I will set him up because he hath known My Name."

Francis used to illustrate this patience under evil repute by the Blessed Virgin's example. When Joseph was troubled at finding her to be with child, she, in her humility, did not proclaim the marvellous Grace of God which had called her to be Mother of the Incarnate Word, but she waited in quiet trust until it pleased Him to satisfy her husband's mind by the message of an Angel. S. Paul teaches us the same lesson when he says, "Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath, for it is written, Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, saith the Lord."[1]

§ XII. *Resignation in illness.*

There is a time for everything—a time to pray, and a time to endure. We must not seek fruit on our trees during winter or spring. A man must be made of iron who can act while he has to suffer, or suffer while he is acting. When God calls us to endure suffering, He generally dismisses us from our active calling.

Some sick people are wont to complain, not of their sufferings so much as of their incapacity to serve God as they served Him in the days of their health; but herein they greatly err, for surely one

[1] Rom. xii. 19.

hour's suffering borne in love and submission to God's Will is worth more than many days of loveless toil. The real matter is that we always want to serve God after our own fashion, not His; according to our own will, not as He wills. We accept His Will readily when it does not thwart ours, instead of seeking our own will only so far as it is conformed to His. Thus God wills us to be sick, but we would fain be well. He chooses that we should serve Him passively in suffering; we want to serve Him actively. He marks out the way of patience for us, and we persist rather in seeking humility, devotion, prayer, or whatever we happen to prefer for our own sake, not His. We are not prepared to take our food with gall and vinegar and bitter herbs; we prefer Tabor to Calvary, and it is there that we persist in striving to make our tabernacles. In a word, we like health better than sickness, and therefore our love is not so earnest in the one as in the other. We love God better when He caresses than when He chastens us; that is, we love the sweetness of His Love better than the very Love Itself. He who loves God purely will love Him alike in all seasons—sickness and health, prosperity and adversity, suffering and enjoyment.

To one of his spiritual children who complained during a long illness of incapacity for mental prayer, the Bishop says: "Do not be disturbed because you are obliged to lie still without being able to meditate. Bearing the Lord's rod is as profitable as meditation; nay, rather it is better to hang on the Cross with Him than to gaze upon Him from afar. I am sure that your heart rises up to Him from your bed many times in the day. Obey your doctors, and when they forbid any practice, whether it be fasting, meditation, saying of offices, anything whatsoever save ejaculatory prayer, I intreat you by your love and respect for me to be

very obedient; it is God's Will for you. When you recover and are strong again, you can resume your former habits, and with God's Help you will make great progress."

§ XIII. *Perfect resignation knows no exceptions.*

When the Bishop of Geneva was in Paris, in 1619, one of the nobles who accompanied the Prince of Savoy thither became so ill that the doctors pronounced his recovery hopeless. He wished the Bishop to visit him in his sickness, and Francis found him bearing his pain with real courage, yet all the while he was fretting over comparatively trifling matters. He was willing to be ill and to die, he said; but it was hard to die away from his home. He wanted his usual doctor, he wanted his wife and children; he was restlessly anxious not to be buried in Paris, and nervously precise about the details of his burial, his epitaph, and the like. "Oh human frailty!" Francis de Sales exclaimed. "This man is considered a first-rate statesman and soldier, full of wisdom and judgment, and yet his mind runs upon such trifling matters now!"

Next the sick man complained of the air and the water of Paris, of his doctors and nurses, of his apartments, his bed, of everything, in short. He could not die in peace, because the hour of death had not found him where he wished to be. At last he died, having received the Sacraments, and submitting himself in a measure to God's Will. In speaking of this the Bishop said to me: "It is not enough to accept God's Will generally; we must accept it in every circumstance and detail. We must not only be ready to be ill, if it pleases God to send sickness, but we must be willing to accept that form of illness, in that place and time, and among those people, which He shall order.

The one measure to us must be His most holy Will." Blessed indeed is he who can say from the bottom of his heart: "As Thou wilt, and how Thou wilt." "I am Thy servant, and the son of Thy handmaiden; forsake not the work of Thine own Hands."

§ XIV. *The Bishop's calmness in sickness.*

Just before he became Coadjutor of Geneva, Francis de Sales was dangerously ill. He was told of his imminent danger, and received the announcement as calmly as though he already saw Heaven open to receive him. Ready alike for life or death, he said no more than, "I am the Lord's, let Him do with me as He will." Some one told him that he ought to wish for life, if not in order to serve God's Church, at least for longer penitence. "I must die sooner or later," he said, "and whenever it may be, one will sorely need God's great Mercy. I would as lief fall into the hands of that Mercy to-day as to-morrow. He is ever Good and Pitiful, we ever evil, and those whose life is briefest have the lightest reckoning to make. I was about to be given a burden which is not less formidable than death, and if it rested with me to decide between them, I should scarce know which to choose. Better far to leave it all to God's Providence; better to fall asleep on Jesus' Breast than to wake elsewhere. God loves us, He knows what is good for us better than we know ourselves. 'Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord.' He has the keys of life and death; they who trust in Him shall never be confounded. 'Let us also go that we may die with Him.'" Some one remarked that it was grievous that he should die thus in the prime of life (for he was then only thirty-five). "Our Dear Lord died younger," Francis answered. "The number of our

days is in His Hand. He has a right to gather His own fruit when He will." "Do not think so much about these petty details," he said again. "Let us think solely of His Holy Will. Let that be our guiding star. It will lead us to Jesus Christ, whether it be in the manger, or on Calvary. Whosoever follows that Will cannot walk in darkness; he shall enter into light eternal, and shall never see death."

CHAPTER V.

ON PATIENCE.

§ I. *Impatient murmurs.*

IT was a frequent saying of Francis, "He who complains, sins" ("Qui se plaint, pèche"). It has been asked whether he meant to forbid all assertion of our rights, all dwelling upon what we suffer, with a view to obtaining relief? This is too literal an acceptance of the Bishop's words. He meant such complaints as trench very closely upon murmuring; and was wont to say that people who indulged freely in complaining are apt to sin, because self-love always exaggerates the injury done to itself, and uses over-strong language in describing circumstances which would be very differently treated if we were the offenders instead of the offended.

He did not think it wrong to go to law in order to remedy such injuries as may be done to a man in body, fortune, or reputation, so long as it is done calmly and dispassionately. But he used to say that it is not easy for human frailty to be sufficiently guarded or calm, even in a court of justice, and he would quote the proverb, that "in a hundred pounds of lawsuit you don't find one ounce of friendly feeling."

In sickness, Francis taught us to tell what we were suffering, in all simplicity, to those whose office it is to give us relief, physicians being God's servants, and He having commanded us to give them honour. But in all other cases, he held complaints to be not merely useless, but for the

most part wrong, because it is so difficult for one who is displeased and sore not to overstep truth in his representations. Whatever may be the visible cause from which we suffer, the ultimate cause we know to be God's Will, which makes use of all others either for our correction or for our growth in holiness, and thus, in point of fact, all our murmurs are to a certain extent against God. Those whose privilege it was to attend our saintly Father in various illnesses, including his last, have told me that they never heard him utter one complaint. He used to say what he felt quite simply, without exaggerating or concealing anything, and then he gave himself up to his doctors, taking whatever was given him, not merely with patience, but as though it were welcome.

§ II. *Complaint a sign of impatience.*

Francis held that even the most just complaint involves a certain amount of self-love, and that all lengthy bemoaning one's troubles indicates much too great sensitiveness and want of courage. After all, of what use are complaints save to make a stir, and to tell everybody that we are bearing the wrong done us with reluctant vexation, and not without a longing for revenge? An ill-greased wheel makes most noise, and the impatient man is ever loudest in complaint. Yet these people do not like to be thought impatient; on the contrary, they have generally a great deal to say about what they would do, and the vengeance they would inflict, were it not forbidden by God. Surely all this is unworthy of one who has devoted himself to the service of a Crucified Lord? Not that all lamentation under great bodily or mental suffering, or in severe losses, is forbidden. Job poured forth his sorrows without lessening his character for patience, and it would be actually wrong to conceal

physical evils, and perhaps thereby endanger life. There are times for silent endurance, and times when it is right to express suffering; the Son of God Himself wept over Lazarus, and cried with a loud voice from the Cross. But all expression of complaint should be regulated by discretion, which S. Anthony called the "regent and governor of the kingdom of virtue."

"There is one failing," the Bishop said, "which often slides imperceptibly into our talk, and from which few people are free, while yet it is very hurtful: I mean that when we blame a neighbour or complain of him (which should happen as seldom as possible), we do not know how to come to an end. We go on for ever repeating our complaints over and over again, the sure sign of a fretful heart which has not yet attained true charity. Large, fervent hearts do not fret over little things, and even great matters do not continue to trouble them for long." This is the sure test between such complaints as are well founded and those that are otherwise; namely, whether they are made gently, charitably, and without bitterness.

§ III. *The Bishop checks M. de Belley's complaints.*

One day I complained to our dear Father of some gross wrong that had been done to me. The case was so flagrant, that he fully admitted it. Finding this, I was triumphant, and used a torrent of words to exaggerate the urgency of my cause. In order to check this outpour, the Bishop said, "In truth these people are much to blame to have dealt thus with you. It is unworthy of themselves, especially towards one in your position, but I only see one thing in the whole matter that is really of importance to you."

"What may that be?" I asked.

"That you should be wiser than they are, and hold

your tongue," he replied. He so entirely shut me up with this answer that I had nothing more to say.

§ IV. *A similar rebuke.*

Another day I complained to Francis of certain conspicuous wrongs done to me by a person of well-known excellence. "Do you not know," he asked, "that nothing stings so sharply as the honey bee?" But then he softened the severity of his remark by adding, "Consider who it was that betrayed Jesus Christ, and remember what the Prophet Zechariah says of Him, 'These are the wounds with which I was wounded in the house of my friends' (xiii. 6). These persons are well-meaning men, misled by a false zeal, and we must believe that as soon as they discover the truth they will do you justice. There are twenty-four hours in every day, and sufficient to each is the evil thereof. Pray that God would open their eyes, and deliver you from calumny. But at the worst, is it not the duty of a true Christian to bless those that curse him, to pray for those that persecute him, and to render good for evil if he would be the child of that Heavenly Father Who causes His sun to shine on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain upon the just and the unjust? Let your sighs go peacefully up before God, saying, '*Maledicent et Tu benedices.*'" (They curse, but Thou blessest.) And he urged upon me that unless the evil was very urgent, and the complaint strictly just, it was always wrong to complain, and the sign of a weak, over-sensitive mind. He said that God's true servant seldom pitied himself, and still seldomer sought the pity of others; and he used to liken people who make dismal lamentations in order to excite their friends' compassion, to children who run to their nurse with a hurt finger, that she may kiss it, or make believe to cry with them! The world is very full of such unrealities, and there is a

great deal of mourning which at bottom is mere conventionalism, or studied affectation; like the woman who made a pompous display of mourning on hearing of her husband's supposed death, but when he returned alive and well, declined to put it off, saying that forsooth she had greater cause than ever to wear it then!

All our troubles will melt away like starlight before the rising sun, if we face them in the Light of the Cross; how can the followers of so sorrow-stricken a Leader dare to complain of their burden? That "bundle of myrrh" from the Saviour's wounds is the salve for all our wounds, which in truth are turned to blessings under the healing hand of penitence, just as the bee turns the bitter thyme juice that it gathers into honey. If we have not courage and energy enough to repress our anguish, if we are too weak to carry out the Apostle's admonition, and suffer with joy, glorying in the Cross of Christ,—(a very different tone of mind from peevish lamentation), at all events let us be wise enough to pour out our complaints only to those real and trustworthy friends who will deal with them in a firm, judicious way; otherwise an indiscreet, ill-judged sympathy will but serve to aggravate our troubles instead of clearing them away. The worst of all this is that we are apt not only to be piteous and troublesome in our complaints, but very often inconsiderate into the bargain, indiscreetly exposing all our resentments to any chance bystander, who will laugh at us if he is indifferent to the matter, or if he takes a side in it, will add fuel to the flames and urge on our folly. A woman complained once to Francis de Sales that when her husband was well he always left her to join the army; and when he came back wounded or ill he was so peevish that she did not know what to do with him. "What would you have?" the Bishop asked. "He cannot remain with you when he is well, and you cannot remain

CIFIC SCHOOL

with him when he is ill! If you loved one another in and for God, you would not be troubled thus; your affection would be the same, absent or present, in sickness and in health. Pray to God that it may be so, or you will have little comfort in life."

§ V. *M. de Belley complains again.*

I complained to the Bishop of a very serious outrage just offered to me. "I should try to comfort anybody else," he said, "but your position and my sincere love for you lead me to dispense with any such ceremony. I have no oil to pour into your wound, and perhaps my commiseration would only add to the inflammation. I have naught save vinegar and salt to apply!"

He went on to remark: "You ended by saying that a man ought to have a most prodigious amount of patience to bear such trials in silence. Evidently your stock is but small, since you are so loud in your complaints!"

"But, dearest Father," I said, "I only complain to you in all loving confidence! To whom is a son to carry his griefs, if not to a good and loving father?"

"Oh you very baby!" he answered; "how long will you cleave to your babyhood! Is it fitting that you, who are yourself a father of souls, whom God has called to be a Father in His Church, should be so childish? S. Paul says that he who is a child may speak as a child, but it is unseemly in a man to do so: the broken words which are pretty from a baby's lips become simply ridiculous in one grown up. Do you want me to feed you with milk and broth, instead of meat, and to kiss your cut finger? Have you not teeth strong enough to eat bread, even the hard bread of sorrow? Instead of complaining in this way to your earthly father, you should turn to your Heavenly Father, and say with David, 'I

was dumb and opened not my mouth, for it was Thy doing.'"

"But this trial comes not from God—solely from men, and from bad men too."

"What! Cannot you see God's Will in that? how He permits the trial, and makes use of man's wickedness to correct your faults and confirm your strength? Job knew better; he said, 'The Lord hath given, the Lord hath taken away:' he did not say, 'the devil, or the Chaldeans;' he recognised God's Hand doing it all, by whatever instruments He pleased. You are a long way off from the mental altitude which enabled David to say, when smitten, 'Thy rod and Thy staff comfort me;' or, 'I am free among the dead;' 'I was like a deaf man, and as one that is dumb, who doth not open his mouth, and in whose mouth are no reproofs;' 'I held my tongue and spake nothing; I kept silence, yea, even from good words;' words which might have served to prove his innocence, and to justify him. You will be ready to say, 'Father, when did you become so severe, when did your indulgence change to such cruelty?' just as Job cried out, 'Where is Thy former loving-kindness?' But, indeed, I am as loving as ever to you; God knows that I love you better than I love myself, and I am only rebuking you as I would rebuke my own soul, were it guilty of the like fault. But now consider. It is plain that this outrage does not please you. We do not complain of what pleases us; rather we rejoice and call for the congratulation of our friends: bear witness the parable of the lost sheep, and the talent which was found."

"Of course."

"Well, you man of little faith and little patience! what has become of all your Evangelic maxims, about turning your cheek to him that smites you, giving your cloak to him that has taken your coat; or the grace of persecution; or about blessing those

that curse you, praying for them that persecute you, and loving your enemies with a true hearty love? Do you count all these precepts as mere ornaments to be hung up against the wall, or are they not rather seals of the Bridegroom to be stamped upon heart and hand, ruling every thought and deed? However, as S. Paul says, 'I spare you,' out of mere indulgence—but only on condition that in future you are more courageous, and that when God sends you any such trying favours, you shut them up carefully, lest their healing perfume should evaporate: and learn to thank your Heavenly Father in your heart for vouchsafing you ever so small a share in the Cross of His Dear Son.

"You delight in wearing a gold cross upon your breast, while you cannot bear the tiniest inward cross without striving to cast it out by murmuring! And then forsooth you talk about patience! and you would fain have me believe you to be patient; just as if the real result of patience would not be freedom from resentment and complaint! Really, I think you have no right to appeal to so great a genius as Patience under this injury—the duel does not require so important a second—a little modesty and silence would serve your turn!"

The Bishop left me thoroughly ashamed of myself, and yet so braced by the discipline, that I felt as if in future no conceivable injury or outrage could draw forth one word of complaint from me! He says much the same in a letter: "Nothing will tend so much to train us in calmness under this life's vexations as constant recollection of all the affliction, want, contempt, calumny, insult, and sorrow which beset our Dear Lord, from His Birth to His most bitter Death. By the side of such trials, surely we can scarce presume to call our petty troubles and untoward accidents by the name of adversity. We must feel almost ashamed to ask Him for patience under such trifling mishaps,

when a very little humility would enable us to bear all the insults offered us with quiet endurance."

§ VI. *How to make a good use of unjust accusations.*

Francis used to say that there is a rich harvest to be reaped from insult and injury, which call forth and strengthen many graces in us.

1. Justice. Who is there that sinneth not, and does not consequently deserve correction? Has some one offended you? Bethink you how often you have offended God, and how fair it is that you should be punished by these instruments of His Justice.

2. If justly accused, we must simply acknowledge our fault, asking forgiveness of God and man, and thanking him who brings the fault home to us, even if it was unpleasantly done. Many a most disagreeable medicine is very useful in its effects.

3. If unjustly accused, bear witness to the truth calmly and without excitement. This much you owe to your neighbour's edification, which might be damaged by your silence.

4. If, nevertheless, you are still accused, do not persist in self-defence; "give place unto wrath," and exercise your patience, silence, and meekness.

5. This is a matter of prudence:—if you take no heed of a false accusation, it will die away; but vehement self-justification seems almost to confirm it.

6. Then follows Discretion, the essence of which is to be moderate.

7. Courage and Resolution; as attained by self-mastery; as an ancient poet says:

> "Fortior est qui se, quam qui fortissima vincit
> Mœnia, nec virtus altius ire potest."

8. Temperance; which restrains your headlong impulses.

9. Humility, the very force of which lies in not merely realising but accepting abjection.

10. Faith itself, which, as S. Paul tells us, "stopped the mouths of lions," and teaches us to look to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, beneath His load of insult and injury, silent in His calm dignity, "as a sheep before her shearers, so He openeth not His Mouth."

11. Hope, which teaches us to look beyond this passing evil hour to a crown which never fades.

12. And lastly, Charity, which is patient, tender, compassionate, gracious; which believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things, bears all things.

In truth, if we really studied our eternal welfare, we should prize the injuries and insults which we encounter; counting them very precious as so many means of doing that which is acceptable to God.

§ VII. *An instance of the Bishop's own patience.*

Francis de Sales had become surety for a friend for a large sum, and so soon as it was due the creditor pressed the Bishop for payment. Francis mildly represented that the gentleman in question possessed the required sum over and over again, and would unquestionably pay all due interest, but that being at the moment absent on military service, the transaction must wait; and he requested the creditor to be patient. For some reason or other, this was precisely what he could not be, and he forthwith raised a great storm of unreasonable complaint and undue pressure. The Bishop asked simply for time to communicate with his friend. This was refused, and the refusal accompanied with sharp words and insulting reproaches. Francis preserved the most perfect meekness, and only answered, "Sir, I am your pastor, do you intend to take the bread out of my mouth, instead of supplying it, as the flock should do? You know that I

am straitened in means, and have barely wherewith to live; I never possessed so large a sum as that which you require of me, although I guaranteed it out of kindness; why do you press me, rather than your real debtor, for payment? What small patrimony I possess is at your disposal; you can take my furniture and sell it if you will. All I ask is, that you do not lose sight of the Love of God, or offend Him by anger, hatred, or scandal given. So long as you heed this, I am satisfied."

The creditor denounced all such words as mere moonshine and verbiage;[1] but the Bishop treated all his insults as though they were pearls and roses. Still he was grieved at the wrong done in God's Sight, and in order to put a stop to so much evil, he said at last, "Well, sir, my indiscretion in serving my friend has been the cause of all your anger, and I shall forthwith take steps in order to satisfy your demand, but I beseech you to remember that were you to thrust out one of my eyes, I should turn upon you a friendly glance with the other." The man went away ashamed, and when, shortly after, the real debtor had set the whole matter straight, he came to the Bishop, and humbly apologised. Francis received him with open arms, and showed him the greatest kindness, saying that he was "a conquered friend."

§ VIII. *The Bishop's forbearance.*

A man of rank once asked Francis for a living for one of his friends. The Bishop replied that he had voluntarily tied his own hands as to all patronage, which was given solely by competition, he, although president of the judges, retaining only his single vote. But he promised to bear the recommendation in mind, if the candidate in question presented himself with the rest for examina-

[1] "Fumée et eau benite de cour."

tion. The nobleman was very angry; he accused the Bishop of hypocrisy and deceit, and losing all self-control, went on to violent threats. Francis saw no better defence than silence, and remained firm as a rock battered by the stormy waves. His occasional attempts at a soothing word were scornfully rejected as mere sops fit to appease girls!

Francis next proposed to examine the ecclesiastic in question, but he, conscious of his own incapacity, refused to appear. "Would you have me trust him with the souls committed to my charge thus blindly?" the Bishop asked. But the angry visitor only waxed more passionate in his offensive speeches and insults. At length he retired, and an eminent ecclesiastic who had been present throughout could not refrain from asking Francis how he had been able to bear such gross insult so calmly?

"Don't you see," he replied, "that it was not the man himself who gave vent to all that; it was his passion! Otherwise he is one of my kind friends, and you will see that my silence will make him a still faster friend." Then with a graver voice he went on to say—"Can you not understand that God has mercifully designed from all eternity to give me strength to bear this injury? Would you not have me drink this cup which so good a Father sends me? It is a most precious cup, coming as it does from that Hand Which I have learnt from childhood to adore."

"But did you really not feel moved?" the other asked.

"I tried to turn my thoughts," Francis replied, "to all the good qualities of my friend which I have experienced before; and I hope that when this fit of ill temper is past, and the mist has cleared away, he will come round, and be friendly again."

He was perfectly right in his prophecy. The nobleman came to a better mind, and was heartily ashamed of his disrespectful conduct; with tears in

his eyes he came to the Bishop to ask forgiveness, and it was Francis' task not merely to forgive but to console him for what had passed. As the Bishop foretold, this man became a faster friend than before.

§ IX. *How to encounter calumny.*

The Bishop was asked whether it was not a duty to meet calumny with the weapons of truth? He replied that such circumstances required the exercise of several virtues. First, Truth, to which we are bound to bear witness for the love of God and for our own sake; but that should be done gently and quietly, without eagerness or excitement, and without anxiety as to the result. When the Jews accused our Saviour of having a devil, He simply answered, "I have not a devil."[1] If you are accused of any great or scandalous fault, of which you know that you are not guilty, answer simply and quietly to that effect.

2. If you are still reproached with it, Humility must play her part. You will do well to confess that you have many grievous though unperceived faults; that you are very frail, more worthy of pity than of wrath; that if God did not uphold you, you would fall far more deeply. All such humiliation is nowise inconsistent with truth. Was it not in such a spirit of real humility and humble reality that David said, "If the Lord had not helped me, it had not failed but my soul had been put to silence."[2]

3. If your enemies persist in their attacks, Silence must be brought to bear, according to the prophet-king's words, "I became as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs." If answering again is as oil to the lamp of calumny, silence is the water which puts it out. When you

[1] John viii. 49. [2] Ps. xciv. 17.

reply, you cause fresh irritation; when you are silent, irritation dies out.

4. But if Silence avails nothing, then comes Patience with her impenetrable buckler. We are told in God's Word that "patience has her perfect work." Patience and charity combined attain the blessing promised to those who hunger after righteousness, and who are persecuted for its sake.

5. If fresh attacks come, seek fresh constancy in your patience, and arm yourself to bear any onslaught.

6. And if calumny still prevails, seek refuge in long-suffering—which means prolonged patience.

7. This will result in perseverance, which endures to the end, and wins the crown at last.

8. Prudence, gentleness, and modesty will each have its share, but paramount above all is that queen of virtues, the life and soul of all the rest, Charity, without which all else is as a worthless heap of stones. Charity casts coals of fire upon those who calumniate us; she blesses those who curse; she prays for those who persecute us; and sometimes she turns our foes into friends, our enemies into lovers.

§ X. *Patience under misrepresentation.*

Francis loved to dwell upon the Apostle's words, "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath."[1] Cannon balls are deadened by sacks of wool, he used to say, though they destroy all the hard substances which they meet. "A soft answer turneth away wrath," as water puts out fire. The Bishop used to say that an angry elephant might be calmed by a little lamb, and that a bear will run away from a cat! Our Dear Lord promised that the meek shall inherit the earth, inasmuch as by their gentleness and kindness they

[1] Rom. xii. 19.

become masters of the hearts of men. Gentle people easily mould themselves to the will of others, and in consequence other men submit more easily to their will.

In all serious cases of misrepresentation Francis taught that the only course is to dwell upon the thought of our Saviour dying a shameful death upon the Cross between two thieves. "Surely a glance at this brazen serpent will serve to heal the wounds which misrepresentation or slander have inflicted? When we look upon that depth of suffering, we shall be ashamed to complain, much more to feel any resentment towards our slanderers."

"But how if my silence is a cause of scandal to any one?"

"To that I reply, that after duly setting forth the truth, you may be at peace, always bearing in mind that there is a great difference between active and passive scandal. The first is given by bad men, the last is often taken by weak ones. Bad men give scandal by vicious conduct, but the best of people may give it innocently, if they are unjustly accused. Our Lord Himself was called 'a stone of stumbling;' and He told His disciples that they would all be 'offended because of Him' on the night of His Passion. He it was Who said, 'Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake: rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in Heaven.'[1] Not but what we may have recourse to prayer that it would please God to turn the trouble from us. Thus David prayed to be delivered from the false lips and deceitful tongues of men, as also to be set free from shame and rebuke, that he might serve the Lord uprightly. Be sure that he who can preserve inward peace amidst the storm of slander has made great progress in the way of perfection."

[1] Luke vi. 22, 23.

§ XI. *Francis de Sales' favourite beatitude.*

The Bishop was asked to which of the beatitudes he gave the preference. The person who put the question said afterwards that he expected Francis would say he should choose the blessing promised to the meek; but he answered instead, that his favourite amongst those blessings was "Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake." He was pressed to give his reason: "Because," he replied, "their life is hid with Christ in God, and they are conformed to His Image and Likeness—inasmuch as all through His earthly life He was persecuted for that very righteousness' sake which He came to fulfil. Such as these," Francis went on to say, "are hid with God. They are held to be evil and they are good; dead and they are alive; poor and they are rich; foolish and they are wise; in a word, they are lightly esteemed among men, but very precious in the Sight of God, to Whom they are a savour of life unto life." He went on to make a most characteristic remark: "If by God's Grace any good thing were found in me, or if He pleased to work anything good in and through me, I should wish that when the thoughts of all hearts are manifested at the Judgment Day, God Alone might know whatever of good there were in me, and that all creation should know that which was evil!" Truly God is very wondrous in the souls He fills with His Grace, and the workings of His holy Love are past our comprehension.

§ XII. *Patience in sickness.*

Francis once ministered to a person who was very ill, and whose patience under extreme suffering not only seemed to be, but actually was, very remark-

able. His words were, that "she had found the honeycomb in the lion's jaw." Nevertheless, in the spirit of reality which was his characteristic, the Bishop wished to test this person's patience, and to ascertain whether she bore her sufferings so well out of simple love of God, not for the sake of human praise. To this end, he enlarged upon her trials, praised her fortitude and courage, her silence and the good example which she set forth, knowing that such expressions would draw forth her real mind. Nor was he mistaken. The invalid, whose patience was really that which Holy Scripture tells us shall bring forth a "perfect work," replied, "Indeed, Father, you do not see the rebellion which pervades my senses, and the lower parts of my nature. There all is tumult and disorder, and if God's Grace and fear did not uphold my better nature, I should long ago have fallen away totally into absolute revolt against Him. I am like the prophet who was borne of an angel by the hair of his head. My patience hangs upon a very slender thread, and if the Lord had not helped me, I should long since have been cast into hell. It is not me, but the Grace of God in me, which makes me seem to be patient. All that is of myself is mere hypocrisy, and, if I were to follow my own impulses, I should fight with my pains, I should cry out, and complain, and upbraid God because of them; but he puts a bridle on my lips, so that I dare not murmur under the pressure of His Hand, but I am constrained by His Grace to love and honour it." The Bishop left this sick person, saying to those around, "She has indeed attained true Christian patience, and we ought rather to rejoice over her sufferings than to grieve for them; hers is the strength which is made perfect in weakness. But I would have you observe how God hides the perfection with which He gifts her from her own eyes. Patience must not only be firm; it must be loving and humble, flowing in its own pure uncon-

taminated stream. Beware, however, of telling her what I say, lest it should excite her vanity, and so ruin the whole economy of Grace. Its waters can only flow along the valley of humility. Let her possess her soul in peace. Truly her peace is great, in spite of her bitter trial."

§ XIII. *Concerning long illnesses.*

Violent illness either passes away quickly, or causes death; but tedious long illnesses sorely try the patience, both of the sick man and of those around him. "Long illnesses," Francis said, "are a good school of compassion for those who nurse the sick; as also of loving patience for the sufferer. The first stand before the Cross with Our Lady and S. John, learning the lesson of their tender sympathy; and the latter is, as it were, nailed to the Cross with our Lord, sharing in the agony of His Passion. How can we learn these precious lessons, save by charity on both sides? The Blessed Virgin and S. John suffered a most tender sorrow because of their great love for their Dear Crucified Lord. It was at the foot of the Cross that her soul was pierced through with the promised sword; it was there that the beloved disciple drank the bitter cup which his Master told him of after he had been privileged to behold the glories of Mount Tabor. The whole Christian life is but one long scene of suffering."

"You are the bride" (so Francis said to one in great anguish) "of Christ Crucified, not as yet of Christ Glorified; and therefore the jewels, the ornaments with which He now adorns you, are the Cross, the nails, the thorns: His wedding feast is gall, hyssop, and vinegar. In another life we shall find the rubies, diamonds, and emeralds; the new wine, honey, and manna."

This world is but as a quarry, where the living stones of the Heavenly Jerusalem are cut and moulded, even as the Church sings—

"Many a blow and biting sculpture
Polished well those stones elect,
In their places now compacted
By the Heavenly Architect;
Who therewith hath willed for ever
That His Palace should be decked."

§ XIV. *The Bishop's reverence for the sick.*

If the poor are members of Jesus Christ by reason of their poverty, so are the sick by reason of their pain, inasmuch as our Saviour Himself said, "I was sick, and ye visited Me." The royal Saint Louis of France used to tend the sick upon his knees and bareheaded, in acknowledgment that they were partakers of the Cross of Jesus Christ. Francis once wrote to a sick person, "While you are lying in pain upon your bed, I hold you in special reverence and honour, as one who is God's own child, clothed with His robe, visited by His Own Hand. When our Dear Lord hung upon the Cross His very enemies proclaimed Him to be a King, and those souls whom He raises to His Cross reign there with Him. Do you know, I think the angels must be ready to envy man the power of suffering somewhat for our Lord—the angels who have never been able to suffer for Him. S. Paul gloried in his infirmities and in the Cross of Christ, even after he had been taken up into Paradise, and permitted to see the vision of the Lord."

He goes on to commend a matter of importance to the sufferer's prayers: "I beg you to commend a work which I have much at heart to God, and that especially amid your pains, for your brief and hearty prayers offered at such times will be very efficacious. Ask, too, for those

graces of which you stand most in need at such seasons."

"'Nam veræ voces tum primum pectore ab imo
Exoriuntur, et eripitur persona, manet res.'" [1]

§ XV. *His own patience in sickness.*

The Bishop's own patience in sickness was all love and gentleness, and no one ever heard him utter a complaint or express the slightest wish for anything save perfect conformity to God's Will. He never indulged in any regrets concerning the work he might have done for God or man had he been well; he was ready to accept whatever suffering God's Will had prepared for him. "He knows best; let Him do as seemeth good in His Eyes—It is the Lord—Thy Will, not mine, be done—Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in Thy Sight—May Thy law be ever graven in my heart." When he was asked if he would take any medicine or food, or submit to any remedy, such as bleeding and the like, he always answered, "Do what you please to the sick man; I am in the hands of my physician." He was always as simple and obedient as a child, seeing God's authority in the physician, inasmuch as He has created the healing art, and bidden men to "honour the physician." He used to speak of his illness so simply, without exaggerating or concealing anything, and however oppressed with pain or weakness, there was always a serenity in his face and a brightness in his eye which shone forth through all physical suffering.

[1] "For then their words their inmost hearts lay bare,
And, now the mask is off, the truth declare."

CHAPTER VI.

ON HUMILITY.

§ I. *Signs of progress in holiness.*

ONE of the best of these Francis held to be a readiness to receive rebuke and correction. Just as it is the sign of a good digestion when a man can assimilate rough, coarse food, so it is the sign of a healthy spiritual condition to be able to say with the Wise Man, "He that regardeth reproof is prudent."[1] It is a sure sign that a man abhors sin, and that his faults are rather inadvertent than deliberate, when he accepts reproof thankfully. He who welcomes correction shows that he desires to avoid the fault for which he is corrected.

A sick man takes the remedies administered by his doctor, however nauseous or bitter or painful they may be; and in like manner he who aims at holiness, which is the soul's true health, will not shrink from such correction and rebuke as may help him to attain his end.

Another sign of progress in holiness is when a man is careful not to let slip any occasion of exercising humility. These occasions are sometimes passive, sometimes active, and most people are only willing to accept the active form of humility, while they stoutly reject that which is passive. I mean that we may be willing to humble ourselves in word or act, but not to be humbled by another; we each choose to pay the debt with our own hands, and in the coin we see fit to select; we may correct and admonish ourselves, but we will not tolerate correc-

[1] Prov. xv. 5.

tion or reproof from others. Yet it is an unquestionable fact that one ounce of humiliation and correction from another hand is more profitable than a hundredweight which is self-imposed. Our best actions are often marred by self-choosing and self-pleasing; just when we fancy them to be most satisfactory they often prove mere empty abortions, like the Dead Sea fruits, which have a fair outside, and are full of naught save dust within.

§ II. *Different kinds of humility.*

Francis used to divide humility into two kinds, external and internal, saying that if the former be not the result of, or at least accompanied by, the latter, it is most dangerous, because in such case it is a mere outer shell, a deceitful show; whereas if the outward expression is the result of an inward grace it is most profitable, and very edifying to all around. He further divided interior humility under two heads; that of the understanding, and that of the will. The first is common enough; who can help realising that he is a mere nothing? And accordingly we hear many flowing words concerning the general nothingness of self and of all creatures. But the second is very rare, and that because few men love humiliation. Humility of the will again may be divided into several degrees—loving it, wishing for it, and practising it, either by seeking occasions for humiliations, or accepting them willingly when they arise.

The Bishop prized this last chiefly, because there is more abjection in bearing, embracing, accepting joyfully such humiliations as come upon us unsought than in any we choose for ourselves, that which is self-chosen being always liable to the assaults of self-love, unless the mind be very pure and upright. Moreover, where there is least to be found of man, there is most of God. He who can attain to the

point of taking pleasure in infirmities and in reproaches for Christ's Sake, being "filled with comfort, exceeding joyful," as S. Paul says, has indeed attained to a deep, a sublime humility.

§ III. *Characteristics of true humility.*

Francis held that both these kinds of humility must be built upon charity, otherwise they become mere heathen virtues. Thus abjection should be prized as a means of pleasing God by accepting humiliations irrespective of our own choice: the crosses that we shape for ourselves, he used to say, are always lighter than such as are laid upon us; and he counted one ounce of endurance to be more profitable than many pounds of active work, however intrinsically good, which springs from our own will. To his mind the true test of humility is how a man bears contempt, reproach, depreciation, abjection. It is in these that a man becomes conformed to our Great Example, Who humbled Himself, being obedient even unto death upon the Cross.

Next to this Francis valued a voluntary going forth to meet humiliations, if they are not already in our path; but he said that this requires great discretion, as a subtle self-love very easily glides in and deceives a man. To take pleasure in humiliation and abjection, as though they were honourable, and to shun such honour as captivates common minds, implies a great degree of humility, he said; and he quoted Moses, who preferred sharing the reproach of his people to the pleasures of Egypt; Esther rejecting the ornaments offered to her; the Apostles rejoicing to suffer shame for the name of Christ, and David exposing himself to Michal's contempt by dancing before the Ark. Further, he taught that humility must be joined with obedience, remembering what S. Paul says of our Lord, that

"He humbled Himself, and was obedient." You must measure humility by its obedience, he used to say. If you obey promptly, freely, cheerfully, without murmuring, arguing, or answering again, then you are really humble. Obedience implies submission, and a truly humble man counts himself as inferior and subject to every one for the love of Jesus Christ, esteeming all men as his superiors, himself but as the "outcast and offscouring of all nations." He advised those whom he taught to cultivate humility in every action, hiding as far as might be all good deeds from the eyes of men, desiring only that they may be seen of God. At the same time he did not inculcate a restrained self-consciousness which fears to do what is right in the sight of others. He liked a bold, brave, noble humility, not a poor, cowardly imitation thereof. He would have nothing done with so despicable an aim as mere praise, but neither would he have any good deed left undone because it might attract human applause. Such quibbles, he used to say, were only worthy of the weakly folk whose head aches if they do but smell a rose. But, above all, he pressed the importance of never talking about oneself, either in praise or blame, save when really necessary, and even then with great reserve. Self-blame and self-praise alike spring from vanity, he used to say. As to boasting, that is so purely ridiculous as to be condemned by all men, and words of self-depreciation, unless they are intensely sincere, and spring from a very strong conviction of worthlessness, are a very refined form of vanity. He who utters them very rarely believes them himself or really wishes others to believe them; he only intends to be thought very humble, and therein he is like an oarsman, who turns his back to the point towards which he rows.

§ IV. *All grace, and chiefly humility, must be hidden.*

Francis used to say that there are two graces which, while they should be ceaselessly exercised, should, if possible, be never or most rarely mentioned—Humility and Chastity.

"Really, dear Father," I once said, "I do not agree with you. On the contrary, I would have the world re-echo with these two precious words. I would carve them on every tree, and write them in letters of gold on every portal!"

"My reason for what I say," the Saint answered, "is that neither of these graces can be praised, either generally or in an individual, without tarnishing their freshness. I say this, because, first, I believe that no human language is competent to describe their worth, and consequently all insufficient commendation is injurious; secondly, because to praise humility excites self-love to seek it on a wrong ground; and thirdly, when we praise any one for being humble we flatter his vanity and tempt him to indulge it in a very dangerous way; the more humble he thinks himself so much the less humble will he really be, and of course he will fancy himself humble when he sees that he is considered to be so. And as to purity, the mere commendation thereof suggests an almost imperceptible thought of its opposite vice, which is a sort of temptation, and to praise an individual for it is clearly to place a stumbling-block in his way, by exciting his pride. Moreover, we should never put any confidence in the purity of past time—it is a treasure contained in a very weak and fragile vessel. For all these reasons I hold it to be prudent to say very little about either virtue, while it is all the more necessary to cultivate both diligently.

"I do not mean," he went on to say, "that one is

to carry this to excess, and refrain from speaking of these graces on fitting occasions, no, nor in terms of commendation too. They can never be sufficiently cherished, esteemed, cultivated, praised; but what is all that after all? All this foliage of commendation is not worth the tiniest practical fruit. Now for your arguments on the other side."

"I have nothing else to say," was my inevitable answer. "You have taken the wind out of my sails, and I can only follow in your wake!"

§ V. *It is well to conceal our graces.*

A certain prelate came to visit our dear Father, and was most courteously received by him for some days. One Friday evening Francis de Sales went to his guest's room to summon him to supper, which was waiting. "Supper!" exclaimed the Bishop; "surely not to-day? It seems to me that the very least one can do is to fast once in the week!"

Francis said no more, but sending some refreshment to his chamber, left the Bishop, and went himself to supper with his own chaplains and those of his guest. These priests told him how rigidly strict their lord was in all his religious exercises, whether prayer, fasting, or the like; and how he never relaxed in the smallest particular under any circumstances, or in any society. One day when we were discussing holy liberty of spirit, Francis told this to me, saying that he held consideration for others to be the offspring of charity as much as fasting is the sister of obedience; and that inasmuch as mercy is better than sacrifice, one ought not to scruple about giving a preference to kindly consideration and hospitality rather than to fasting. "You see," he added, "one must not be so devoted even to the most pious practices as to be unable sometimes to break into them; otherwise, under pretext of firmness and stedfastness, a very subtle

self-love is apt to slip in, and make us neglect the end for the means, and stop short in the path intended to lead us to God, instead of going on to God Himself. As to the particular case of which we were speaking, one Friday fast thus broken would have been a veil to many others, and the grace of concealing a grace is in itself not slight. Our God is a hidden God, Who likes to be served and worshipped secretly. You remember the story of the King of Israel who so heedlessly displayed his treasures to the Assyrian ambassador, and how later on those treasures were violently carried away by an invading army. *Crede mihi, bene qui latuit bene vixit.* No one who saw him at supper on Friday would have known that his habit was to fast; he might have deferred his fast to Saturday, or to the next week; or he might have omitted it altogether, as an act of consideration and charity. Of course this does not apply to a vow, for anything that comes under that class must be steadily adhered to, regardless of men, so long as God be served."

§ VI. *How to use imperfections.*

Flies and fleas are extremely troublesome, but they do not torture us; they may call for some endurance, scarcely for patience. So great a grace is hardly required to meet so trifling an annoyance.

Some people have so thin-skinned a conscience that every little failing vexes them, and then they are vexed at having been vexed, with a more vexing vexation than before! All this has its root in a self-love which is all the more difficult to cure by reason of its being so secret. Mischief which is easily perceived is half cured. This class of people have so good an opinion of themselves that as soon as they are conscious of any little failing, they are as troubled as a beauty who detects a blemish in her complexion. They are like valetudinarians, who

are always thinking about their health, and end by destroying it through their endless precautions and antidotes. Francis de Sales used to say that we ought to defend our ramparts with our own earth-works; in other words, that we should turn our very failings to account, by letting them confirm our hearty humility and our hope against hope. In this way, he said, we oblige even our enemies to fight for us. Of a truth, if the sight of our failings tends to deepen our humility, we turn our loss to gain, for any real progress in that most precious grace is an abundant compensation for our small imperfections.

§ VII. *Mistrust of self.*

Left to ourselves we are naught save evil and weakness, and unable of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God, "from Whom cometh every good and perfect gift." We are incapable of grasping the supernatural or eternal, and it behoves us to live in continual mistrust of self.

Following the argument of his favourite "Spiritual Combat," the Bishop took this mistrust as the foundation of interior perfection. It is one of the world's maxims, that mistrust is the parent of security, because it ensures a man being on his guard; and in like manner, it is essential to the spiritual life, as we may find from many expressions in Holy Scripture. "Whoso despiseth little things shall fall by little and little." He who walks the tight-rope carries a weight in order that he may keep his equilibrium in so dangerous a position; and in this life, where it is often hard to stand upright, we greatly need to tread between fear and hope; in other words, mistrust of self and confidence in God. The memory of past faults ought to teach us how frail we are, and that without God's upholding Grace, we should fall back into our past sins—

perhaps even worse, as a relapse is generally more dangerous than the first illness. It is never safe to trust to past good works or the multitude of good habits and spiritual riches which we may imagine ourselves to possess. So frail are we that one moment will suffice to lose all that we have tardily acquired—just as half an hour's flames may consume the property we have been years gathering together.

"However far advanced towards perfection," Francis said, "we need perpetual watchfulness, for the passions are prone to rekindle even in those who have for years followed the religious life, and made great progress therein. A certain monk, one Sylvanus, a follower of S. Pacomius, had been a comic actor before he was converted. Nothing could be more exemplary than his conduct during his probation, and for some years after, and no trace of his old profession seemed to cleave to him. At the end of twenty years, thinking that his former tastes and passions were altogether extinguished, he ventured upon some trifling fooleries, ostensibly for the amusement of his brethren; but the poor man was terribly mistaken. Former bad habits revived to such an extent that his light conduct nearly led to his expulsion from the convent. Indeed, he would have been sent away but for one of his brethren, who undertook to be his surety, and guaranteed his reformation, which was actually effected, and Sylvanus eventually became a saint."

§ VIII. *True mistrust of self must be founded on true confidence in God.*

I once asked the Bishop how one could attain perfect mistrust of self? He replied, "by trusting perfectly in God." He added that these two things were as the scales of a balance, as one went up the other went down. The greater our mistrust in self, so much greater will be our confidence in

God, and the less of self-mistrust, so much the less trust in Him. If we had no self-trust at all, our trust would be wholly in God.

"Is it not possible," I asked, "to mistrust oneself most entirely through a clear perception of one's own helplessness and wretchedness, and yet not to put all one's trust in God?"

"Not so," he answered, "if you are rooted and built up in charity, and if it is the mainspring of all your actions; and without this no mistrust of self can be Christian and supernatural. Such mistrust as that which you describe would only tend to depression and want of energy, but a real, loving, Christian-like mistrust of self is cheerful, hearty, and brave, and leads us to say, 'Not I, but the Grace of God that is with me:' without the help of that Grace, I cannot even frame one holy thought; with it, I can do all things, knowing that what is impossible to man is easy to God, Who can do whatsoever He will, in earth and in heaven. He said to His Apostles, 'Be not afraid, I have overcome the world.' And the Prophet says, 'They that put their trust in the Lord shall be even as the Mount Zion, which may not be removed, but standeth fast for ever and ever.'"[1]

§ IX. *Humble words.*

Francis could not abide humble words unless they were thoroughly sincere and genuine. He used to say that such words were the very essence and refinement of pride. A really humble man does not want to seem but to be humble. Humility is so sensitive that it shrinks from its own shadow, and cannot hear itself mentioned without running a risk of being lost.

He who blames himself often is indirectly seeking praise; he would be very sorry if others believed

[1] Ps. cxxv. 1.

the evil of which he accuses himself, and it is mere pride which makes him wish to be thought humble.

§ X. *How Francis dealt with false humility.*

He often took people at their word when they made humble speeches in his presence, sometimes indeed giving still greater force to such expressions so as to bring those who uttered them to a wholesome confusion, and teach them to be more careful for the future. For instance, when I first became a Bishop, he required of me, as I thought, too high a standard of perfection. "My dear Father," I said once, "you forget that I have but just left the world, and am given the office of a teacher almost before becoming a disciple! You treat me as if I were far advanced in holiness and able to teach others, whereas really I have hardly as yet entered within the gate thereof!"

"Quite true," he answered, "I probably realise all that even more fully than you do yourself. I look upon you as a brand snatched from the burning, and still smelling of smoke; but after all you are now a Bishop, and you must arouse your paternal feelings, and fix your eyes upon perfection. It will not do for you to be content to drink from your own cistern; you must impart its waters to others—God, reason, and your office alike demand it of you: you must not look behind, unless you would become a statue. *O Pastor, ô idolum.* If you trust in yourself, you will never do anything, but if you trust in God, there is nothing you may not do. He delights in showing forth His Strength in our weakness, His Power in our helplessness, in confounding that which is by the things which are not. Mistrust of self is a very blessed thing, provided it be accompanied by trust in God, and the further you advance in the one the more earnest the other will be. But all distrustful humility is a false humility."

On another occasion a Sister who had been elected Superior declined the appointment with great professions of unworthiness. The Bishop reiterated all her assertions even more strongly than she herself, saying that doubtless she was but a poor creature, and all the Sisters knew her incapacity, the narrowness of her mind, the weakness of her judgment, her want of manner, her numberless failings, and her want of power to set a good example, but that God perhaps allowed her election in order to correct these faults, now that she was to be placed in a responsible position before Him, as well as in the sight of men and angels. He reminded her that the Community was not intrusted to her but to God, Who often chooses the weak to confound the wise of this world, through the foolishness of the Cross. He bade her remember that a reed of the desert may become a pillar of the Temple in the Hand of Christ, and that if she held firm to that Powerful Hand, it would never fail her. It was thus our dear Father taught his children to avoid all such vain words as borrow the mask of humility, and shroud pride beneath a false lowliness.

§ XI. *Self-excusing.*

Self-excuse is another evil scarcely less fatal than a dishonest self-accusation. A good man is quick to accuse himself, and to confess his faults, in all sincerity, with a view to their salutary correction; but excuses are often more damaging than the original fault, inasmuch as they prove that the speaker thinks his error justifiable.

If our first parents had not made false excuses, throwing the blame,—Adam on Eve, Eve on the serpent,—if they had honestly and penitently confessed their sin, they might have overcome the Evil One, and God, Who so pitifully called Adam when he was hiding in his shame, would have for-

given them. It was with the sense of this that David cried out, "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and keep the door of my lips. Let not my heart be inclined to any evil thing;"[1] meaning excuses invented to cloke his sins. We must strive to be altogether just and true in this matter. "Do not excuse or accuse yourself without due consideration," Francis used to say; "if you excuse yourself without reason, you will become over bold; and if you accuse yourself unreasonably, you will become cowardly. Go on in all simplicity, and you will obtain a quiet confidence."

I heard him say once, "He who makes unreal excuses practically accuses himself most forcibly; but he who accuses himself simply and humbly deserves to be mercifully excused and lovingly forgiven."

There is a confession which brings shame, and another which results in glory. S. Ambrose says that confession is the true remedy for sin in him who really repents.

§ XII. *Memory and judgment.*

Francis complained one day of his want of memory. I observed that it was amply compensated by his judgment, which is the chief, while memory is but a follower, who makes more show than result, without the assistance of good judgment. "It is true," he answered, "that a great memory and great judgment are not often lodged in one house; they may often be found together in a limited degree, but rarely to a very high extent." I gave Cardinal Perrone as an exception; to which Francis agreed, adding that the two qualities were so naturally unlike, that one almost necessarily banished the other. "One comes from natural quickness, the other drags itself with leaden steps." "And so," I said, "you

[1] Ps. cxli. 3, 4.

need not complain of your share, for you have the best of the two. I wish I could give you my memory, which is often very much in my way, by smothering me, both in preaching and writing, with ideas; and that you could give me a little of your judgment, in which I know I am very deficient."

At this Francis began to laugh, and embracing me said, "Well now, I really do believe you mean what you say! I only know one man beside yourself who honestly told me that he was lacking in judgment. It is a commodity which those who lack most are apt to fancy they possess, and I think few are worse off in that respect than the people who imagine they have most. It is common enough to lament over a want of memory, or even of will—people are not shy of that—but as to lack of judgment or intellect, nobody likes to own to it; every one treats it as an insult. Never mind, you will acquire plenty as you get older; it is one of the results of age and experience, which is more than one can say of memory. Lack of memory is unquestionably an infirmity of old age, so I cannot hope for any improvement in that respect, but so long as I can remember my God, I will be content."

§ XIII. *Indifference to being well thought of.*

The Bishop taught one to value being hated for God's Sake, even as our Lord says, "Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My Sake; great is your reward in heaven." He constantly repeated the promise, "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake." "Marvel not if the world hate you; it hated Me before it hated you: for My kingdom is not of this world, neither are ye of this world, the friendship of which is enmity with God. If ye were of the world, the world would love his

own." This is the spirit in which we must rejoice to be lightly esteemed.

1. We ought to shrink from being loved otherwise than in and for God, because there is so great a danger lest earthly affection, however good and lawful in its origin, should degenerate into somewhat of evil, especially between persons of different sexes.

2. It is a kind of theft to wish to be loved save in God, stealing away something of the heart we wish to obtain, whereas no one has a nearly large enough heart to love God rightly.

3. All such wishes sin against a jealous God, Who will not have any rival or peer in our hearts. His Love must be all or nothing to us.

4. It indicates very great vanity to suppose that one has any right to claim another person's love. "How fortunate they are," Francis used to say, "who have no attractions, because they may be sure that those who love them do so solely for God's Sake." Even a lawful love which is not referred to God takes somewhat away from the love we owe to Him Who would have us love Him with our whole heart. "O God, either take us from out the world, or the world from us! Tear our hearts from the world, or the world from our hearts! All that is not God is worthless. What have I in heaven or earth, save Thee, my God!"

§ XIV. *A good reputation.*

Nevertheless, in matters of good fame Francis was not disposed to turn goats into a vineyard, or dogs into the larder. He thought that men were bound to protect their character, only less with a view to their own credit than to the general edification and God's Glory. He used to liken a good repute to tobacco, which may be useful if used rarely and sparingly, but which injures the brain if immoderately used. No one practised what

he thought more stedfastly than himself. Once some ill-intentioned people abused the Bishop of Geneva violently on account of some advice he had given during his stay in Paris to certain very holy people. In writing to me concerning this, he said, "I am told that my beard is being shaven close in Paris, but I hope God will let it grow stronger than before, if it can promote His service. Indeed, I only care for a good name so far as that is concerned. So long as God is served what does it matter whether it be through our good or evil repute?"

"After all," he said to me one day, "what is this idol reputation, to which so many bow down? Merely a dream, a shadow, an opinion, empty smoke, praise which is forgotten as soon as spoken, and which is often so unreal that we hear ourselves praised for virtues which we know we do not possess, and blamed for faults we have not committed. It will not do to be sensitive about slander. It is only a little wordy cross which the breeze carries away. I don't like the expression, 'He stung me' (*Il m'a piqué*), meaning some affronting speech; there is a great difference between the buzzing of a bee and its sting. You must have a very thin skin and sensitive ear if you cannot bear the humming of flies.

"He was worldly wise who invented the proverb, '*Bonne renommée vaut mieux que ceinture dorée.*'[1] The spirit of faith teaches us quite otherwise. Who ever was so slandered and overwhelmed by calumny as our Dear Lord? Yet the Father hath given Him a Name above every name. The Apostles too rejoiced in that they were permitted to suffer shame for the Name of Christ Jesus. You will say it is a great thing to suffer for a great cause. Yes, forsooth, we will have none save creditable persecution, so that our light may shine amid darkness, and our vanity gather food amid our pain; we

[1] "Better a good name than a golden girdle."

want to be crucified gloriously! Do you suppose that when the martyrs underwent their cruel tortures, they were applauded by the spectators? were they not rather overwhelmed with shame and execration? But how few men we find who are willing to be despised for His Glory, Who died a shameful death for us, to win us a glory which shall never end."

§ XV. *Vanity.*

That mental vanity which leads a man to think himself better than he really is, is dangerous; but still more so that which affects the will, and which makes him aspire to and fancy that he deserves a higher position than that in which he is placed. The first stops in a certain kind of contented repose, but the last is in perpetual unrest, despising whatever is inferior or equal to himself, and valuing only that superior position which he covets. Even if he attains it, it will only be a stepping-stone to fresh pretensions, and thus his life passes away like a traveller moving from inn to inn. Our dear Father thought himself only too exalted in the Church, and his aim was rather to come down than rise higher; he would have sought retirement and solitude in preference to great responsibilities. He shrank from the high esteem in which he knew himself to be held, and feared to be less truly God's servant, because he stood so well with his fellow-men.

Some one asked him once how he was able to preserve a lively humility amid so much applause and honour? Francis answered: "You do well to commend holy humility to me, for, as you know, in our mountain parts a high wind withers the flowers, and tears up the trees by their roots. As a Bishop, I am raised on somewhat of an eminence, and so I am the more exposed to the wind. O Lord, help me! Say Thou to the storm of vanity Be still, and there will be a great calm."

§ XVI. *Early authorship.*

I began to write while very young, and to publish much too early. One day, as I was confessing this to our dear Father, he observed that the ordinary opinion on such matters is that men should "write late and speak early." A young Religious, who was both priest and preacher, wished to publish a book, and accordingly took it to his Superior for the necessary permission. The Superior promised to read the manuscript and give his opinion upon it, and then he merely added, "*Mon père*, have you nothing more to learn?" as though to say that it is rather for those who have studied much to write books than for such as are still students. Francis maintained that the fruits of authorship were seldom ripe before autumn, whereas that of preaching is acceptable in its spring freshness, or its summer warmth. You need lead when you write, and quicksilver when you speak, he used to say. On the other hand, some think it well to publish early, especially as errors may be corrected in future editions: and some men rejoice in the labours of their youth, like those who have builded or planted. Perhaps it does not much matter which course a man takes, so long as he looks to God as the End and Object of all his work. If a man really defers the publication of his writings till after his death, in order to shun applause, the motive is good, but if he only wants to avoid censure and criticism, it is but vanity. The middle course is often safe, and he who has a talent for writing may write early with the prospect of improving as time goes on, whereas we must give account to God, if we hide any gift under a bushel; and he who is over-timid of criticism is like a man who fears to travel in the summer because of the flies!

§ XVII. *The Bishop's humility.*

Francis could not but be aware of the veneration in which his piety was held, not by his own people alone, but on all sides. In truth he humbled himself before God on this account, and not unfrequently he was seen to blush before men, when it was made evident to him that he was looked upon as a saint and a devoted servant of God. Not that he dealt in words of self-conscious humility; he was strict in his rule of never speaking of himself in matters good, bad, or indifferent, save when it was really called for. Sometimes he would say that it was but a sorry kindness to praise him thus; that people would forget to pray for him if they thought so highly of him, and so his entrance into bliss would be delayed. "I would rather find the fruit of good works and compassion than these redundant leaves of flattery and applause. An ounce of work is worth many pounds' weight of words. People talk of the *eau bénite de la cour;* I call all this *eau bénite du monde*—smooth speeches followed by unkind deeds."

§ XVIII. *S. Bernard.*

When the world around gazed in marvelling admiration at the supernatural powers with which S. Bernard was gifted, he wept, saying, "It is written that many of those that have done wonderful works will be lost, while the poor in spirit are saved; moreover these things excite the praise of men, and tempt one to vainglory; therefore I weep because of my own peril." Francis de Sales shared in this feeling, especially when sick people were brought to him that he might cure them. He often used to sigh over the reputation he had among men for holiness as a real danger and evil.

§ XIX. *Boasting to be shunned.*

On one occasion the Bishop made a dangerous journey to Geneva, in order to confer with the Baron de Luz, who was sent thither by the King of France. Both I and other friends reproached him for the risks he had run ; he the while taking the blame upon himself, rather than accusing his attendants of imprudence. At last I said, "Well, Father, it might have been your gain ; if these people had murdered you, instead of a confessor you would have become a martyr."

"How do you know," Francis answered, "that God would have given me the grace and constancy to win such a crown?"

I replied that I had no doubt as to his dying a thousand deaths sooner than deny the faith.

"I know what I ought to do under such circumstances," he said, "but I am not a prophet, and cannot say what I should have done. S. Peter was full of firm resolutions, but he fell back before a maid's accusation. Blessed is he who never ceases to fear and mistrust his own weakness and puts all his trust in God. In His Strength, we can do all things ; without Him, nothing."

§ XX. *M. de Belley asks to be called his son.*

Considering that Francis de Sales had consecrated me with his own hands, I felt I had a right to call him my Father. But finding that he would treat my office with such respect as to refuse to call me his son, I ventured, when writing, to press very urgently for the privilege of being so called by him. He answered that while respect always accompanies real affection, it must not be allowed to choke love ; the rather that excessive respect results in fear, which is incompatible with a hearty free love ; but

that on the other hand love without respect is apt to degenerate into unseemly familiarity. However, to gratify me as well as himself, henceforth he would look upon me, even as the patriarch Jacob looked upon his son Joseph—as a father, because Joseph was viceroy of Egypt, and in that character he sustained his own father during the famine; as a brother in grace, and as a son by nature. "So I will esteem you," Francis wrote, "as a father by reason of the advantages of nature and grace which God has given to you over me; as a brother in the Church's state and office; and since you wish it, as a son—my only son, for you are the only Bishop I ever consecrated, by reason of the grace God vouchsafed to give you by the laying on of my hands. I do not beseech you to receive this grace anew, for I hope you have never lost it, but I entreat you to give good heed that it bear fruit, and to use it diligently in His Service Who has graciously bestowed it upon you."

§ XXI. *The "Introduction."*

When the "Introduction à la Vie dévote" obtained so great a success, some of the Bishop's worldly-wise friends advised him never to write anything more, as it was scarcely possible that a second work should be equally successful. Speaking of this, he said to me that the holy spirit of Christian wisdom was very different from that of the world's wisdom; just as the maxims of our Crucified Lord were unlike the world's maxims. "These good people love me," he said, "and it is out of kindness that they hold such language, but if they would turn from me, a poor wretched man, and fix their thoughts on God, they would speak very differently. If it has pleased God to bless this one little book, why should He not give His Blessing equally to another? and if He willed to

bring forth aught to His Own Glory from it, even as He called light out of darkness, is His Arm shortened or His Power lost? Can He not, as of old, bring forth streams of living water from an ass's jaw? These kind friends of mine are thinking solely of me and my credit, as though all such matters should not be referred to God Alone. So far from seeking the praise of men, S. Paul tells us that to please men is a bad sign in one who would truly serve God; 'the friendship of the world is enmity with God.' If I have acquired any vain reputation from my book, I should do well to write something that will disperse all such mist of vain-glory. I would fain seek to be esteemed vile by men, to be crucified to the world and acceptable to God."

§ XXII. *How Francis accepted slander.*

Sometimes the Bishop was told of strange reports and tales concerning himself; what human merit is beyond the reach of slander? So far from justifying himself, he would say, "Is that all? How little they know about it! they spare, they flatter me; they pity rather than envy me, and would fain amend me! Well, praised be God! One must strive to correct one's faults, and if I was not to blame in this matter I am in many another, and friendly warnings are blessings."

If one remonstrated, alleging that the accusations were false, he would answer, "Well, then, it should remind me not to let them become true. I ought to be thankful to have the danger pointed out." If we grew angry with the slanderers, Francis used to say, "What now! have I retained you to grow angry for my sake? Let them say what they please; such things are mere wordy crosses, passing gusts of annoyance, forgotten as soon as uttered. One must be sensitive indeed to be

troubled at the buzzing of a fly! Who ever said that I am faultless? Very possibly these people see me in a truer light than either I or those who love me do: we are very apt to call the truths which offend us by the name of slander. What does it matter if others have a poor opinion of one? Ought we not to have the like of ourselves? Such men are rather friends than enemies, since they help to crush one's self-esteem; why be angry with any one who helps us to defeat so dangerous an enemy?"

It was thus that he met slander and insult with meekness and silence, saying that they were too light evils to call out so great a grace as patience.

§ XXIII. *Indifference to unjust blame.*

How could one who thus freely sacrificed his real reputation, counting it worthless save wherein it promoted God's Glory, be eager for the world's empty praise? A serious calumny was once freely circulated concerning Francis; but all he said was, "I humbled myself, and swallowed my grief, without putting forward such justification as was in my power, and the result of this patience was to kindle a warmer love of God within my heart, and to give vigour to my prayers. I said to God, Thou art my refuge and strength in mine adversity. Deliver me, O God of truth; save me from the lips of the destroyer."

To one who felt all that damaged him more than he did himself he wrote, "In all these matters, God knows just how much good repute is required for me to serve Him as He wills, and I desire neither more nor less than what He pleases to allot me."

§ XXIV. *The Bishop's ready way of meeting accusations.*

A worthy person once came to Francis to tell him that, in consequence of certain things he had heard, his former respect was changed into dislike for the Bishop. Francis did not inquire what these might be; he only answered at once, "I like you all the better!"

"How can that be?"

"Because you must be very honest to speak in such a way to me, and I prize honesty not a little."

"But what I say is my real opinion, my actual and deliberate mind."

"And what I say is my real opinion, past, present, and future," Francis replied. The other went on to say that his dislike arose from hearing that Francis had sided with his adversary in an important and difficult legal case.

"It is true," the Bishop said; "I did so because I believe that his was the right side."

"You ought to act as a universal Father, not taking one side or the other," the man answered.

"But do not fathers distinguish between their children when they quarrel, as to who is right and who wrong?" Francis asked. "Besides, the result of the judgment given should satisfy you as to the justice of the case."

"I was unfairly treated."

"Most assuredly if I had been one of your judges, I should have given a like decision against you."

"A good way of curing my dislike to you!" the man replied.

"This is the usual complaint of the losing side," Francis said, "but in time, when you have regained a quieter mind, you will bless God, and the judges who were His instruments, for having taken away

property which you could not retain with justice or a good conscience; and then you will cease to be angry with them or me; but this cannot be till the veil of passion drops from your eyes. I pray God to grant you this grace."

"Amen," the other answered; "but I wonder if you were sincere in saying that you liked me all the better?"

"I never spoke a truer word," the Bishop replied; "who would not like one who opens his heart so honestly, and lays his wounds so bare for healing? I think it is real heroism to do so; very unlike worldly men, who display smooth looks and keep up hatred in their hearts." He then showed the complainant how clearly justice was against him, with such force, that the person in question could not but admit himself to have gained by losing, thanking God for the same. "Nevertheless," he added, "I do not think so highly of you as I once did; I used to believe that you were a saint."

"Then you were very wrong," Francis replied, "for I can assure you in all truth and apart from humility, that I am a long way off the character which my friends attribute to me; indeed, I believe they only do so because they wish to see me become what they say I am. And now that you have a less good opinion of me, I like you all the better, because you are of my mind. Those who flatter me deceive themselves and me by their untruths, and put me in danger of being lost through presumption; but such men as think slightingly of me do what I ought to do for myself; teaching me humility, and helping me forward in the way of salvation. It is written that God will exalt the humble and meek, and indeed I prefer the wounds of truth to the caresses of flattery. 'Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.' And the end of all this is that I really do like you better than I did."

§ XXV. *The Bishop's submissive spirit.*

Submission to superiors is rather justice than humility, inasmuch as we are forced to acknowledge that they are our masters. Submission to equals is friendship, civility, and courtesy. Submission to inferiors is the real test of humility, because thereby we confess ourselves to be as naught, and prostrate ourselves before the whole world. No one ever carried this out more really than our dear Father. He used to obey his servant in all that concerned dressing and undressing, etc., as though he were his master. If he sat up late at night, reading or writing, he would not let his assistant wait for him. Once in summer, having risen very early for some important business, Francis called his servant to dress him, but the man was sleeping soundly and did not hear. The Bishop looked into his room, and would not awake him, but dressed himself, and went on with his prayers and work. By and by the servant got up, and coming to his master's room, found the Bishop writing, and asked somewhat abruptly who had dressed him? "Myself," the Bishop answered goodnaturedly; "am I not able to do as much as that, think you?"

Vexed with himself, the servant began to grumble. "It wouldn't have been so very much trouble to call me."

"Indeed, my good fellow," the Bishop said, "I can assure you I called lustily, and even went to look for you, but you were sleeping so comfortably that I had not the heart to wake you." The man muttered something about "making fun of him," and the Bishop took great pains to soothe his annoyance, promising that another time he would wake him up, and that he never would dress himself in this way again!

§ XXVI. *Francis' opinion as to sitting for his picture.*

Some eminent servants of God have considered that to allow their portrait to be taken was mere vanity and worldliness ; but Francis, who wished to be "all things to all men," made no such difficulty. He said that if charity requires us to let our neighbours behold our mental being clearly, there can be no reason why we should not allow our friends to have the pleasure of our physical likeness. We put a book, which is our mental portrait, into men's hands voluntarily, why should we withhold the mere features of our face? Writing to a friend who had asked for his portrait, Francis said, "They say I have never been well painted, but I think that matters little. *In imagine pertransit homo, sed et frustra conturbatur.* I have borrowed this picture, for I do not possess one. Oh, if the likeness of my Creator did but shine in my mind, you might indeed rejoice. *O Jesu, tuo lumine, tuo redemptos sanguine sana, refova, perfice, tibi conformes effice. Amen.*"

It was in this way he turned all things to the Glory of God and the good of souls. A less honest, expansive mind would have resisted, and refused to sit for his portrait, with a view to humility, whereas this Saint turns even that portrait itself into a subject for self-humiliation, and that so gracefully that one scarce knows which is most striking, his humility or his loving simplicity.

CHAPTER VII.

ON CHRISTIAN POVERTY.

§ I. *Poor in spirit.*

FRANCIS said that to be poor in spirit implied three very excellent gifts :—simplicity, humility, and Christian poverty. Simplicity, consisting in a single eye to God, and concentrating upon Him all glances which, however simple in themselves, have reference to aught else.

Humility, whereby even as a poor man counts himself the neediest of mankind, so a humble man believes himself to be the lowest, the most unprofitable of servants.

Christian poverty, which Francis classes as, 1. Affective, which may be practised amid overflowing wealth, such as that of Abraham, David, S. Louis, and many other Saints, who loved poverty, and were ready to accept it thankfully, if it were God's Will ; 2. Effective alone, when a man suffers from the discomfort of poverty, but all the time longs for riches ; 3. Affective and effective combined, which is commended in the Gospel—that poverty which is a man's natural portion, or comes through some reverse, and which is willingly accepted. He who is able to bless God for it is treading in the steps of Jesus Christ, of His holy Mother, and His Apostles, all of whom lived in this kind of poverty.

There is another way in which it may be exercised, and that is when, following our Dear Lord's counsel, we sell all we have and give to the poor, in order to follow Him in that poverty which He bore for our sakes that we might be rich. This is

best fulfilled when one who has left all for the Lord's Sake labours with his own hands not merely for support but in order to give alms. Thus S. Paul says, "I have coveted no man's silver or gold or apparel; yea, ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered to my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have showed you how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak."[1]

§ II. *The Bishop's love for poverty.*

"Better is little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble therewith."[2] So thought Francis de Sales, and in truth but little of the revenues of his diocese reached his hands. "Twelve hundred crowns are a very tolerable remainder," he used to say; "there were once much greater Bishops than we are—the Apostles, who had not so much. We do not deserve our pay. I could wish that we had not even that, but that it might be in Geneva as in La Rochelle, a little chapel our sole possession" (this was before the siege of that town). "Religion would make great progress, the people are well disposed, but now politics and fancied liberty exercise a greater sway there than religion." The Bishop had a very large good house at Annecy, but he chose to live in a dingy, poor little room, which he used to call "Francis' room;" and that in which he received his guests, the "Bishop's room." S. Carlo Borromeo, too, had a little cell at the top of his palace, where he used to sleep on straw, and where he often retired for prayer, which he in like manner called his own, while the reception rooms were the "Cardinal's."

One day Francis called my attention to his clothes, saying, "Do not my servants work miracles? They have made me this new cassock out of my old robes; I feel quite smart!" "It is a miracle

[1] Acts xx. 33-35. [2] Prov. xv. 16.

which reminds me of the Israelites in the desert," I answered, "whose garments did not wax old!"

His bursar sometimes complained of having no money. "Never mind," the Bishop would say, "we are all the more like to our Master, Who had not a place wherein to lay His Head."

"But what is to be done?" the poor man asked.

"My son, we must manage somehow."

"It is all very well, but there is nothing to manage."

"I mean that we must sell some of our household utensils, and so live upon our *ménage*."[1]

One day I expressed my wonder how he contrived to maintain his household upon such slender revenues. "God multiplies the five loaves," he answered. I pressed for a more definite answer. "It would cease to be a miracle," he said, playfully, "if we could explain it. Is it not a very blessed thing to live after such a fashion? 'It is of the Lord's Mercy that we are not consumed.'" "You are cruel to torment me thus," I said. "Don't you see," Francis said, "riches are very thorns, as the Gospel tells us; they harass us with a thousand troubles in getting them, as many cares in keeping them, or spending them, and still more grief in losing them! After all, we are but stewards, specially when what we hold belongs to the Church—that is the inheritance of God's poor—the thing that really matters is to use such a trust faithfully. If we have food and raiment let us be therewith content. *Quod amplius est a malo est.* Shall I tell you the truth? I know now just what I do with my money, for my means are cut pretty close, but if I had more, it would give me a great deal of trouble to portion it out. Is it not pleasant to have no cares, like a child? *A chaque jour suffit son*

[1] "Il faut vivre de ménage." This play upon the word *ménage* is untranslateable.

mal. The more one has, the greater reckoning one will have to give."

§ III. *The Bishop's ring.*

In 1619 Francis consented to become Grand Aumonier to Madame Christine de France, the bride of the heir of Savoy, stipulating, however, that his diocese was to suffer no loss in consequence; and accordingly Francis soon returned to Annecy, leaving his brother and coadjutor to supply his place. When he took leave, the Princess presented him with a valuable diamond ring, which the Bishop lost a few days later, when riding over the Alps on his homeward journey. When Francis discovered the loss, he said very quietly that it was a good thing not to have any possession of so precious a nature, and that he hoped some poor person would find the ring, and perhaps be at ease for life. However, the ring was found by a poor man belonging to a neighbouring village, where the Bishop's loss was known, and restored to him, the finder receiving an ample reward.

§ IV. *Superfluities.*

Francis often quoted Seneca's words, "O poverty, so precious but so little known."[1] "I love poverty," he used to say; "who would not love that which was so dear to our Lord through all His earthly ministry? but in truth I know but little of it. I never have come into close contact with it, and I speak as a bystander only." "Truly I think you know still less about riches, possessing so little

[1] Mgr. Belley should have said Lucan:

"O vitæ tuta facultas
Pauperis, angustique lares! O munera nondum
Intellecta Deum!"—*Lucan*, v. 527.

"O Guardian Poverty, gift of God,
A gift but seldom understood!"

as you do," I answered. Whereupon Francis quoted Seneca again,[1] "'Happy that poverty which is cheerful. Only a joyful poverty ceases to be poor.' Such was the Apostles' poverty, when they rejoiced to be partakers of the want and the sufferings of Jesus Christ." He used to say of priests (and S. Paul says it of all Christians) that any one who was not content, having food and raiment, was not worthy of the name, or of having God for "his cup and portion." "My Bishopric is worth as much to me as the Archdiocese of Toledo," he said; "for through it I shall win heaven or hell, according as I fulfil its duties, and the Archbishop can do no more."

"Godliness is great riches to him that is content therewith. My revenues supply my wants; what more do I need? More wealth involves a larger household, and moreover it would all go to feed people who might not be promoting the service of my Crucified Lord. Those who have little superfluity have but little trouble in settling to what they will give, and the King of Glory requires to be served and honoured with discretion. Sometimes men with large incomes spend so much that they are not better off at the end of the year than I am, even if they are not in debt. I consider that to me nothing is the best wealth."

Ambition is best remedied by remembering how many are placed lower than we are; and it is well to counteract avarice by the thought of those who are poorer. Most poverty is only comparative: if we required no more than what is really necessary, we should never be poor; but if we measure our wants by the world's standard, we shall never be rich. He who wants to be really rich should imitate the sculptor, perfecting his work by diminishing his material, rather than the painter, who

[1] "Illa vera non est paupertas,
Si læta est."—*Ep.* ii.

continually adds to it. He will never have enough to whom that which is sufficient does not suffice.

Above all the Bishop could not bear to hear an ecclesiastic complain of poverty, for he said that such men had taken their benefice on the express understanding that there was no wherewithal to maintain them, and had no right to complain. Moreover, let all priests remember that on receiving the tonsure they declared before the Church militant and triumphant that God is their portion, and what can be lacking to him who has God on his side? or what can suffice to him to whom God sufficeth not?

§ V. *Desires must be limited.*

Francis used to say that the "lust of the eyes" never looked below itself, but always above, so that those who were a prey to it were never really content or at peace. So soon as any man desires to be greater or richer than he is, all that he actually possesses is as nothing to him; and when he attains one object, forthwith another rises up; *l'appétit vient en mangeant;* no stream can allay his thirst, and he toils on towards an ever-receding goal, until death puts an end to his hopes and desires. Francis not only knew how to limit his wishes, he rather counted his actual position as far beyond them. In his humility he was wont to marvel that God should have raised him to his weighty office, which he reverenced so highly as to tremble at the thought of its responsibilities, and in the same spirit he marvelled to find himself placed over many men whom he esteemed as greatly superior to himself. When any remark was made concerning the insufficiency of his income to maintain the dignity of the See, he would ask, "How much had the Apostles wherewith to maintain their dignity? A Bishop is bound to be hospitable and give alms, if he has the means; but when he is so

straitened as to have barely enough to live, his goodwill, if hearty, will be accepted. 'God is rich in mercy,' and He looks at the heart and its intention, rather than at the gifts offered to Him."

§ VI. *What a "sufficiency" is.*

I do not mean that which is required by mere pride and vanity, but a sufficiency, of which one of old says that it is always attainable, and involves no superfluity. Those who require merely what is needful are never poor; those who require all that the world exacts are never rich. To be content with such a sufficiency is the real way to be at rest and happy. Writing to a friend, Francis says, "I thank God that you are so satisfied with what He gives you; cease not to thank Him, for the truest happiness of this our earthly life is to be content with what suffices us. He who is not content therewith will never be content with anything." May this maxim rule in all your houses, my Sisters; take for your motto, "No superfluity;"[1] it is too general a failing in communities never to know how to say "Enough." Remember that our blessed Father always urged that no more should be received with each Sister than that which is necessary for the maintenance of the house.

§ VII. "*I know both how to abound and suffer need.*"

Francis de Sales had a special attraction to these words of S. Paul, and he used to say that it is far harder to know how to abound than how to suffer want. A thousand fall under adversity, and ten thousand in prosperity, so hard it is to keep the straight road. Therefore it was that Solomon said, "Give me neither poverty nor riches."

[1] "Rien de trop."

An old writer compares moderation amid wealth to the bush which burned without being consumed, and to the three children who trod the fiery furnace and were not scorched. S. Gregory says that humility is sorely perilled by honours, purity by pleasure, and moderation by riches. He who knows how to abound and how to suffer need proves that amid poverty and wealth he alike sees God Only, since the one fails to cast him down, and the other fails to exalt him unduly. The man who can see his Father's Hand equally in both conditions has discovered the true measure of Christian perfection, and will not fail to attain salvation.

§ VIII. *Seneca and the Gospel.*

I once quoted Seneca to the Bishop as saying that he who eats from off an earthen vessel with as great content as from silver has a great mind; but he who eats off silver with the same indifference as off earthenware has a greater. "He is right," Francis answered, "because the first may be actuated by vanity, but the other's indifference puts him above the pride of wealth." I went on to say that I thought Seneca's maxims came very near to those of the Gospel.

"Yes," he answered, "in the letter, but not at all in the spirit."

I asked him why so?

"Because," Francis said, "the spirit of the Gospel aims solely at putting off self in order to put on the life of Jesus Christ, and at self-renunciation with a view to total dependence upon Grace; whereas the philosopher centres his aim in self, and teaches his disciples to seek all happiness and contentment therein, which is manifest pride. True Christian wisdom must be infinitely small in its own eyes, whereas the heathen philosopher would have his wise man look down upon everything, counting

himself as the creator of his own prosperity, and this is intolerable vanity."

§ IX. *The spirit of poverty amid riches, and of magnificence amid poverty.*

These two things were illustrated in S. Carlo Borromeo and the blessed Francis de Sales. The former had received an enormous fortune from his uncle Pope Paul IV., but amid all his wealth, he preserved the spirit of poverty, using neither plate, tapestry, nor costly furnishings; even his guests were most frugally entertained, and he himself ordinarily lived on bread and water and a few vegetables. The coffers wherein his wealth was stored were the hands of the poor, and thus he was poor amid his riches. On the other hand, Francis had a truly magnificent spirit in spite of his narrow means (he had given up his patrimonial inheritance to his brothers). He did not reject either plate or tapestry, or other splendid furniture, especially for the Altar; and he was always solicitous for the adornment of God's house. Sometimes he received great people with such splendour as to excite the wonder of those who knew how slender his means were. In all this the Bishop's object was to magnify his office, and promote the Glory of his Master, and for this reason I have heard him lament that Kings and Princes so often look upon Bishops merely as their vassals, forgetting how high their office is as pastors and spiritual fathers.

§ X. *Scruples.*

When the Bishop of Geneva was in Paris in 1619, he was consulted by a great man who was very rich in this world's goods, and yet richer in piety and charity. He was troubled lest his wealth should hinder his salvation. Francis asked whence

this fear arose. The nobleman referred to our Saviour's words concerning the difficulty of salvation to them that are rich.

The Bishop inquired if his wealth was ill gotten. No, it was all rightful inheritance, or the reward of his labour. "Do you misuse it then?" asked the prelate. "I live according to my station, but I fear lest I fail to give enough to the poor." "Have you any children?" "Yes, but they are all provided for, and have no further need of me." "Of a truth," Francis said, "I cannot see whence your scruples should arise: you are the first man I have ever known who complained of his abundance. Most men never have enough."

However, Francis quieted the good man's fears, and I heard later on that he had given up his worldly pursuits to devote himself to good works, amid which he ended his days.

§ XI. *Mgr. Grimaldi.*

Francis de Sales used to tell me the history of Mgr. Grimaldi, Archbishop of Vienne, an eminent ecclesiastic in the time of Queen Catherine de Medicis. For some years he led a life of profusion and magnificence at court, but his health was bad, and his affairs always involved. At length, weary of such an unsatisfying life, the Archbishop retired to the quiet little town of Evian on Lake Geneva, much broken in health, and retaining a mere pittance whereon to live with three or four servants. There his sole aim was the dressing of his soul for its summons to God's Presence; but the change which came over him was so great that Mgr. Grimaldi recovered his health, and repaired his fortune in a great measure, becoming meanwhile the universal benefactor of all his neighbours. He was one of the three prelates who consecrated Francis de Sales, in the year 1602,

CHAPTER VIII.

ON MORTIFICATION.

§ I. *The spirit of penitence.*

"MY son," says the Wise Man, "if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation."[1] Who can hope to attain the crown of life without it? Must we not "through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God"? The Son of God entered not into His Glory without suffering, nor can we be His disciples unless we are willing to bear our Cross. We cannot "reign with Him" unless first we "suffer with Him."

"We must continually offer our hearts to the love of Jesus, on that very Altar of the Cross whereupon He offered His for love of us," Francis used to say. "The Cross is the royal gate whereby we must enter the temple of holiness; he who seeks it elsewhere will never find one particle."

That is a true love which loves God in prosperity, provided that prosperity is not loved as well or better than God, for He will have neither rival nor compeer in our hearts. He who would love God rightly must use all blessings given solely for Him, and His more worthy service. But the straighter, shorter road to God's love is through crosses and adversity, amid which one is less tempted to turn aside from the Creator for the creature; and the love of God, as exercised under suffering, has no inducement to stop short in anything save God Himself. He who loves God amid ease and prosperity often finds it hard to disentangle his soul

[1] Ecclus. ii. 1.

from earthly ties and clingings; but in adversity the cup of love has no dregs, and pure unmixed love binds the soul to Christ's Cross. The best sign of a true, hearty, enduring love is when it suffers gladly, even unto death, for its Beloved.

§ II. *Mortification.*

Our dear Father was naturally most gentle and compassionate, but there was a great deal of strength and vigour in his character too, like steel, which is stronger in proportion to the delicacy with which it is tempered. He could not bear people to be soft and indulgent to themselves, and always made war upon such tenderness whenever it came across him; distinguishing, however, between weakness and infirmity and this tenderness of self—the former is natural, and no one could be more compassionate to sinners, specially to such as fall through infirmity and without premeditation; but he was always severe towards those who were indulgent to themselves, saying that such indulgence, whether bodily or mental, was as opposed to all true devotion as eagerness and hurry, both being tokens of self-love.

Francis practised what he taught; he rarely complained of whatever troubled him in body or mind, and even in his last illness, the red-hot iron which was applied to rouse him scarcely drew forth a sigh of pain. He so thoroughly inculcated this spirit among his Religious of the Visitation, that many of the Sisters bore most exceeding sufferings without a murmur, as unworthy of those whose profession it is to live at the foot of the Cross. To one of his children who complained with over-sensitiveness of her dryness in prayer, Francis wrote: "We are always craving for sweetness and consolation; nevertheless the bitter taste of dryness is more profitable. S. Peter would fain

have dwelt upon Mount Tabor, though he fled from Calvary; but the greater work for us was done upon this latter, and the Blood shed there did more for us than the bright shining light of the former." And he used to say, "It is better to eat bread without sugar than sugar without bread."

§ III. *Dangers of prosperity.*

Francis disliked the word *fortune*, and said it was unworthy to pass a Christian's lips. When people talked of "good fortune," "the favours of fortune," and the like common expressions, he used to say, "I marvel that this heathen idol should have survived, when all the rest have been overthrown by Christianity! May God keep those from being favourites of fortune who should seek no other favour or hope save in Him Alone!"

"How can those who profess to cling to the Cross and to glory in its shame be so eager to heap up riches, and cleave so closely to them?" he would exclaim. "Does not the Gospel teach us that Christian blessedness is to be found only in poverty, pain, contempt, and tears? and even mere philosophers tell us that prosperity is but a stepmother to real goodness, while adversity is its true parent."

I asked the Bishop once how it is that we are so quick to have recourse to God under trial. "It is the weakness of the flesh," he said. "The best fish are those that come out of the sea; fresh-water fish are apt to be flabby and poor; even so a great soul finds its level amid crosses and afflictions, while cowards delight in naught save prosperity. Besides," he went on to say, "it is much easier to practise pure love of God amid adversity than when all goes well, for the very nature of trial is to lead us direct to God's Own Will, and unite us to Him, whereas prosperity lulls our senses with its charms,

and like another Dalila deceives us until we transfer the love and gratitude to God which His gifts should excite into a mere clinging to the gifts themselves. Moreover, even when we do give God the glory for His blessings, there is some alloy of self-interest, which takes from the singleness and perfection of our love; as S. Augustine says, 'He, Lord, loves Thee less than is due who loves aught besides Thee, unless he loves it for love of Thee.'"

§ IV. *Benefit of troubles.*

A nobleman who had habitually indulged in excessive expense, more particularly in good living, fell dangerously ill through his excess. His friends asked Francis' prayers for him. The Bishop answered coldly, "He has often ridiculed good works, and now he feels the effect of evil works. The doctors have often told him that he would ruin his health. May it please God that, while losing that of the body, he may find his soul's healing, and he will be no loser. God knows how to rend asunder the shell, and meanwhile to fill the heart with true happiness and strength. Tell him to be trustful; this sickness will not prove unto death, but for the Glory of God; but warn him that unless he amends his life, a worse thing will happen to him."

The sick man took courage from these words, and at the same time they inspired him with a salutary fear, which led to his conversion, and on his recovery his whole life was changed. After having given thanks in church, he went to thank the Bishop of Geneva for his prayers. "Such troubles often are sent by God's mingled justice and mercy," Francis said to him; "so that if we have performed but little voluntary penance for our sins, we may at all events bear some that is involuntary. Happy he who knows how to use it well, and make a virtue of

necessity. It is a grace not given to every one, nor does God set His judgment so mercifully before us all; thank Him for the fatherly infliction of His rod, and say, 'It is good for me that I have been in trouble, that I may learn Thy ways.'"

§ V. *Mortification of natural inclinations.*

One precious saying of our dear Father was that "he who best knows how to mortify his natural inclinations is most open to supernatural inspirations." Unquestionably, interior and exterior mortification draws the Divine Favour towards us, so long as it springs from love, and those who carry a Christlike spirit of mortification in their hearts are kindled with divine fire, like that sacrifice upon which Elijah called it down from heaven, or that of which we read in the Maccabees, which was kindled by the sun's rays.[1]

The Israelites had no manna until the bread they brought out of Egypt was exhausted, and in like manner God's favours are rarely poured out upon those who cleave to their earthly tastes and likings. "My Spirit, saith the Lord, shall not always strive with man."

§ VI. *Chastity of the heart.*

It is impossible to overstate the importance which Francis attached to interior chastity. He used to say that that of the body is merely a husk, whereas interior purity is the kernel; that which is internal is the root, and external purity as the branches and leaves which spring therefrom. He defined chastity of the heart as total renunciation of all illicit affections, citing S. Bernard, who says that it is almost more difficult for a man who mixes freely with the other sex to preserve absolute purity of heart than

[1] 2 Macc. i. 22.

to raise the dead. There is another chastity of the heart, which consists in purity of intention, and this too is most rare, for, as Francis used to say, it implies seeing naught save God in all things, and all things in God. Where He is all in all, there indeed we shall find a ray of Paradise.

§ VII. *A dying life.*

You ask me to explain our dear Father's brief but beautiful saying, "We must live a dying life, and we must die a living and a life-giving death in the life of our King, our Gracious Saviour."

These antitheses are altogether scriptural. S. Paul says, "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." And again, "Christ died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him Who died for them, and rose again." And of himself he says, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

To live a dying life is to live, not after the senses and natural inclinations, but according to the spirit and supernatural inclinations. It is death so far as nature goes;—life, spiritually discerned;—it is destroying "the old man," in order to bring forth the "new man." To die a living, life-giving death is to crucify the flesh with its lusts, so that the spirit of life and grace may live. It is through the life and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, He Who brings life forth from death, that this has been won for us, even as Samson brought honey from the lion's carcase. If we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him: if we suffer we shall also reign with Him.

§ VIII. *Inward purity.*

In the matter of mortification, that which is interior is infinitely better than what is exterior, because it is not liable to hypocrisy, vanity, or

indiscretion, as the latter is. So also such mortifications as visit us directly from God's Hand, or through men as His instruments, are far preferable to such as we choose for ourselves. But some people are very much disposed to practise mortifications which have great appearance of severity, whereas really they are easily borne by those who select them, and then to find it almost impossible to endure comparatively slight ones, which are not self-sought.

For instance, a man will use the discipline and hair shirt, and fast to excess, who meanwhile is so sensitive as to his reputation that the slightest ridicule or slander puts him beside himself with vexation.

Another is diligent in prayer, penitence and the like, and yet if he loses a lawsuit or receives any injury to his property, he goes wild with anger and fury.

A third gives liberal alms and abounds in similar good works, but yields to impatience and murmuring at the lightest touch of pain or sickness.

Many of us bear the trials sent us with more or less patience according to the degree in which they really affect us, without remembering that all alike come from God's Hand; He lays them on us; He alone can remove them. The truth is that we want to serve God, not as He wills, but as we will. Is that right? Are not we and all that we have His only, to do what He pleases with us?

Our dear Father wrote to one of his children, "Often embrace inwardly the crosses which our Lord has laid upon your shoulder, without stopping to think whether they are made of costly and sweet scented wood; the commoner and viler the material so much more real the cross. This is the burden of my song, but it is the Song of the Lamb; somewhat sad perhaps, yet of a most gracious harmony, 'Father, not my will, but Thine be done.'

Magdalene was seeking our Dear Lord even while she had hold of Him. She asked for Him of Himself, for she did not see Him under the form she sought, and therefore she persisted in seeking Him elsewhere. She wanted to see Him in His robe of glory, not in the lowly garb of a gardener, but nevertheless when He called her by her name, 'Mary,' she knew that it was He. Now it is our Lord in this gardener's garb Whom you meet daily in the commonplace mortifications which arise in your path. You would fain that He came to you in more showy ways, but, believe me, the most conspicuous are not the best. Do you not hear Him saying, 'Mary'? In truth, before you see Him in His Glory, need is that He plant many a lowly little flower such as He loves in your garden; and to this end He wears the gardener's garb. May our hearts be ever joined to His, our wills to His good pleasure!"

§ IX. *Victory over the passions.*

Francis confessed with his usual candour and simplicity that the two passions he had found hardest to overcome were love and anger. The first he had conquered by stratagem, but the latter, he said, only by main force, seizing his heart, so to say, with both hands.

The stratagem by which he conquered love was to divert its course: the soul cannot remain without affections, and the great art is to supply it only with all that is good, pure, holy, and true. Our will is shaped by our affections. If we love the world, S. Augustine says, we shall be worldly; if we love Heaven, we shall become heavenly. We become like that which we love. Everything which our dear Father ever wrote breathes a spirit of love, but a most holy love. *Eloquia casta, justificata in semetipsa, et dulciora super mel et favum.*

As to anger, to which he was disposed, he boldly confronted it with such vigour, or more correctly, with such faith and stedfastness, that after his death his gall vessel was found well nigh empty, and the physicians could account for it no other way than by his strenuous efforts to subdue all anger within his heart.

§ X. *Fasting.*

One day the dear Bishop asked me if I was able to fast easily? "So much so," I replied, "that I am seldom hungry, and almost always eat without any appetite."

"Then you should fast but little," he answered. "Why so?" I asked, "considering how much fasting is commended in Holy Scripture?" "It is meant for those who have a better appetite than you," Francis said; "you must substitute something else, and subdue your body by some other means."

"I am not very strong, or able to bear much severe bodily austerity," I said.

"The severest of all is fasting," he observed, "for it lays the axe to the root of the tree, whereas all else does but press lightly here and there. The body is easily subdued when it is poorly nourished, but when full fed, it soon becomes rebellious; sin is soon nurtured by fulness. People who are naturally temperate have a great advantage over others both in study and in spiritual things; their body is like a horse accustomed readily to obey the reins."

Our dear Saint disapproved of immoderate fasting. He used to say that the spirit could not endure the body when over-fed, but that if underfed, the body could not endure the spirit. He advised judicious treatment of both, saying that God likes to be served with judgment; it is easy to lower the body if necessary, but it is not always easy to restore strength which has been injudi-

ciously wasted. It is easier to wound than to heal. The spirit ought to treat the body as its child, when obedient, and not overwhelm it; but if it revolts, it must be treated as a rebellious subject, even as S. Paul says, "I chastise my body, and keep it under." If it behaves as a brute it must be treated with whip and bridle, like "our brother the ass," as S. Francis of Assisi said.

§ XI. *Indiscreet austerity.*

This is a common error among those who are entering upon the first fervours of devotion. They think they can never do enough, seeking to atone for past faults by main force, and never better satisfied with what they are doing than when they are spoiling it all. The evil one, who leaves no stone unturned in his warfare against us, makes use of all this ill-regulated ardour, and such persons become unfit for God's service, by reason of bodily weakness. We need more discretion and the recollection that God requires a reasonable service, judiciously offered. In the early days of his conversion, S. Bernard encountered this stumbling-block, and later in life he used to lament his early austerities, as some men lament their former profligacy, speaking humbly of them as the errors of his youth. I knew one very admirable and learned man, who ruined a most excellent constitution in this way, and would not see that it was a temptation till it was too late. I endeavoured to moderate his zeal, and told him how it would be, but he would not believe it. Francis de Sales wrote to a religious who was overtaxing her strength under the pretext of penitence: "Do not lay any greater austerity upon your feeble frame than what is prescribed by your rule. Keep your bodily strength in order that you may serve God in spiritual exercises, which we are often forced to give up

when we have indiscreetly overtasked the poor instrument which must work with the soul."

Few even among the spiritually minded are consistent in this matter ; the spirit is quick and almost always overwhelms the weak flesh, forgetting that although the flesh hinders the spirit when it is too full, it cannot work with the spirit when it is too feeble.

§ XII. "*Eat such things as are set before you.*"

The Bishop constantly repeated these Gospel words, from which he inferred that it is a more real form of self-denial to accommodate one's tastes to every condition, than always to choose the worst thing. It may often happen that we do not like some great delicacy, and if so, to accept it without any sign of dislike is no slight mortification, and no one but ourselves suffers any inconvenience when we act thus.

The Bishop considered it a sort of discourtesy when at table to call for anything out of reach in preference to that which was at hand, saying that it indicated a mind set upon dishes and sauces ; or if, on the contrary, it was done in order to select the least good things, it savoured of affectation, which he said could no more exist without ostentation than smoke without fire. You may be greedy over cabbage, and self-denying over partridges, but he who is alike indifferent to both shows no ordinary spirit of mortification. It is harder to eat dainties without caring for them than to eat coarse food with satisfaction.

One day some poached eggs were served up to the Bishop (he was wont to quote S. Bernard, saying that men martyred these unfortunate eggs in a hundred ways), and having eaten them, he began to dip his bread in the water which remained in the dish, as though it were a sauce. Seeing his

companions smile, Francis asked the reason, and when they told him what he had done so absently, he replied, "Indeed, you should not have undeceived me, for I assure you I never eat a better sauce; perhaps my good appetite may have had something to do with it; 'there is no sauce like hunger.'"

This incident reminded me of S. Bernard, who paid so little attention to what he eat and drank that he once drank oil instead of wine without finding it out.

§ XIII. *How Francis concealed his self-denial.*

One day I had helped him to some dainty, and noticing that he quietly left it on one side of his plate while he eat something commoner, I said, "Now I have caught you! How about the precept, 'Eat such things as are set before you?'"

He answered in his graceful way, "You don't know what a rustic ploughboy's digestion I have; if I do not eat something rather rough and solid, I shall not satisfy my hunger."

"Indeed, Father," I replied, "that is a mere pretext to conceal your austerity."

"I assure you," the Bishop said, "I meant no deceit; I speak in all sincerity. Nevertheless, with equal sincerity I will not deny that I prefer delicate food to that which is coarse. I would not eat spices and pickles in order to enjoy my wine—we Savoyards enjoy it quite enough without that; but as we eat in order to be nourished rather than to gratify our sensuality, I take that which I know will suit and sustain me best. You know we eat to live; we don't live to eat, or to fix our minds upon the dishes set before us and their different flavours. However, if you will have patience, I will do honour to your good cheer, and after I have laid the foundation with these substantial viands, I will not fail to tile the roof with the dainties you have taken

the trouble to prepare for me." There was such graceful simplicity in all Francis did—these chosen souls who are always following the movements of grace seem never to do anything that is not worthy of admiration; and that because all God's works are perfect, and specially those of grace which are crowned with glory. "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God."

§ XIV. *How Francis concealed his self-denial.*

Francis concealed the instruments of penance which he used so carefully all his life that even the servant who habitually waited upon him never knew of their existence, and it was only after his death that they were found.

CHAPTER IX.

ON CHASTITY.

§ I.

FRANCIS DE SALES' love for purity was so great that he could not bear the slightest action or movement, however accidental, which was contrary to it; he used to call it the beautiful whiteness of the soul. However bright and clear a mirror may be, he was wont to say, it becomes clouded by a mere breath; and the lily grows safely among thorns, pure and sweet, till some rude hand touches it. In this spirit he inculcated the most rigorous modesty in every member, in hands, eyes, and speech, not permitting any game or accident to be counted as any excuse for its neglect.

§ II. *Chastity.*

The Bishop's natural disposition was extremely affectionate, warm, and caressing, but he was sparing of caresses, and reserved in his modest bearing, so that while his gentleness inspired confidence, his serious dignity also inspired, if not fear, a respect which practically came to much the same thing.

"It is not well," he said, to one whom he was advising, "to be so lavish in your caresses, or with such honeyed words, pouring them forth upon every one. If you put too much sugar into food, it becomes sickly, and too many caresses tend to disgust one, especially if one knows that they are offered merely from habit. Too much salt is disagreeable

also, I know, but a well-regulated mixture of both sugar and salt produces a good flavour, and so discreet and judicious caresses are acceptable and wholesome to those on whom they are conferred."

§ III. *Reticence of the eyes.*

One day a lady of this country who was a relation of the Bishop's was mentioned as the most beautiful woman in the neighbourhood.

"So I have heard several times," Francis said.

I answered rather quickly, "Why, you see her frequently; she is your near relation; what do you mean by saying 'you have heard?'"

He replied with perfect simplicity, "Yes, I see her frequently and often talk to her, but I really have never looked at her."

"How can one see people without looking at them?" I asked.

"It is better to see such persons without looking at them over curiously or fixedly," he replied.

S. Ambrose counsels one to whom he writes to keep careful watch over her glances, lest thieves, *i.e.* evil thoughts and desires, should come in at the windows.

Francis de Sales used to say that it was seemly for a Christian to lie down to sleep, remembering that the Eyes of God and of his Guardian Angel are upon him, as also that the Evil One is at hand to tempt him. "We ought to keep God always before our eyes, everywhere and always, alone and in company, even when we sleep. A great saint once bade his disciple give heed to go to rest in God's Presence, as he would do were our Dear Lord present in the flesh in his chamber. You do not behold Him or hear Him, but He is no less present, and guards you while you sleep. How modestly and devoutly we should lie down, folding our arms upon our breast in prayer, if we remember

this." He recommended as our last waking words : "I sleep, but my heart waketh. Keep me, O Lord, as the apple of Thine Eye ; hide me under the shadow of Thy Wings. Let Thy faithfulness and truth be my shield and buckler ; keep me from the terrors of night. I will lay me down in peace and take my rest, for it is Thou, Lord, only that makest me to dwell in safety. Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."

CHAPTER X.

ON CHARITY TOWARDS OUR NEIGHBOUR.

§ I. *How to love our neighbour in God.*

THAT supernatural charity which the Holy Spirit pours into our hearts causes us to love God for His Own Sake with true love; and to love our neighbour with a similar love for God's Sake, because it is His Will, and because it pleases Him, and He is glorified by such a love, which returns to Him as its source. This it is really to love our neighbour in and for God, but it is a rare love, inasmuch as nearly all men "seek their own, not the things which are Christ's."

"Those loving deeds which are done to our neighbour for God's Sake are the most perfect of all," our dear Father said, "because they have reference solely to Him; and the good offices which we render to those we love because of our personal affection are less meritorious, because of the satisfaction and delight we find in them, which is what often prompts them rather than the love of God."

So far from loving our neighbour less because we love him in and for God, we love him far more and better, because our natural friendship becomes supernatural; that which is earthly becomes heavenly; that which is temporal eternal. For this reason Francis used to say that "mere earthly friendships were not wont to last, their origin being so frail that the slightest contradiction chills and blights them; a change which cannot come over those friendships which are built up in God, and

are consequently solid and enduring." He says elsewhere that while all other bonds between heart and heart are mere glass and earthenware, that of holy charity is pure gold and diamonds. S. Catherine of Sienna says, "If you put a glass beneath the fountain, and keep it there while you drink, it will never be the less full, drink as you will—but take it away, and you will soon empty it. Even so with our friendships; do not withdraw them from their real source, and they will never fail."

"We need to look upon our neighbour as in the Breast of Christ," Francis said. "He who does not do this runs the risk of not loving purely, faithfully, or consistently; but if we love our neighbour in Christ, who would not bear with his imperfections, who would be impatient or intolerant of him? That Saviour in Whose Breast we behold him loved him so much as to die for him. Of a truth no other love deserves the name."

§ II. *This supernatural love is rare.*

Love may be natural or supernatural. It is easy to graft the higher upon the lower love, and to love for God's Sake those whom we already love with a natural love, but it is not so easy to love any one with a purely supernatural love. "But," you ask, "is it wrong to love one's neighbour for his own good qualities?" No, to do so is natural love and friendship. But if it is hard to love any one with a purely disinterested natural love, rather than because of the pleasure or benefit we derive from him, it is harder still so to purify our supernatural love as to love only through God and His Holy Will. This is a degree of love to our neighbour only attained by those who are very far advanced in the paths of holiness; and it comprises love of enemies and of persons who are a burden to us;

for it is easy enough to love those who are pleasant and useful to us, but to love people who injure or inconvenience us, solely because God would have us do so, is a supernatural love—one that is wholly in and of God.

Francis writes, "One needs a tender, kindly, loving heart towards one's neighbour, particularly when he is troublesome or offensive to one, because then we love him solely for the Saviour's Sake—a love all the worthier that it is free from earthly motives." I would venture to add to this assertion my own, namely, that it is scarcely less difficult to exercise a pure and wholly disinterested love towards our friends and benefactors than towards our enemies—for to love any one purely and solely in God is an altogether supernatural task.

§ III. *The Bishop's gentleness.*

Francis had the grace of perfectly combining gentleness and affability with a dignity and majesty which reminded one of Moses when he came down from the Mount and was constrained to veil the brightness of his face. Great as his attractions were, so that all were drawn to love him, he possessed such a modest seriousness that it was impossible not to fear, or at all events respect him; yet it was a loving respect too, and I know men who trembled in his presence, not from fear of displeasing him (he was never displeased, but always indulgent to the most unpolished of his guests), but from anxiety to please him. I must confess honestly that I was so delighted when he approved anything I did that I was in the seventh heaven directly,[1] and if he had not taught me to refer everything to God as the ultimate End, rather than to stop short in himself, I should often have halted midway. Many great people who are accustomed to live with princes

[1] "Je donnais de la tête dans les étoiles."

have told me that they felt a greater reverence for Francis de Sales' presence than before any royalty ; it seemed to them as though God's Light shone forth from him, and touched the inmost depths of their heart. There is no need to tell of his gentleness to any who ever saw him. One used to feel as though that grace was embodied in him, and that he was more truly gentleness itself than merely a very gentle person. To this he owed his wonderful ascendancy over men's minds, and as he was ever considerate to every one, making himself all things to all men, people yielded in a wonderful way to his will, which after all was only to bring all to serve God and save their own souls.

§ IV. *The Bishop's gentleness.*

A young man was once brought to him to be severely rebuked. Francis, however, spoke with his usual tenderness, but finding how hardened the culprit was, he wept, saying that a soul so stubborn could scarcely fail to come to a bad end. He was told that the youth's mother had given him her malediction. "Dreadful!" he exclaimed ; "if this woman's words are fulfilled, she may well curse her curses, unhappy mother of a yet more wretched son." The Bishop's words were but too true ; the miserable youth perished not long after and his mother died of grief. Some one found fault with the gentleness of his rebukes in this case. "What would you have?" Francis said. "I did all in my power to arm myself with that wrath which is angry and sinneth not. I took my heart in both hands, and had not power to throw it at his head. And besides, to tell you the truth, I was afraid lest in that one quarter of an hour I should pour out all the scanty store of gentleness which I have been striving to gather up for the last twenty-two years ; you know we swallow at a mouthful the honey

which it has cost a bee months of toil to collect. Moreover, it is of no use to talk when one is not heeded, and this young man is not open to remonstrance: he has neither light nor judgment; I could do nothing for him, but I might have hurt myself by severity, just as men sometimes drown themselves with those they seek to save. Charity must be prudent and judicious."

§ V. *Forbearance.*

Francis specially urged upon all his children the duty of forbearance and patient, though just toleration of other people's weaknesses. He has often said to me, "How much easier it is to suit oneself to others than to bend them to our opinions and humours. The human mind is a very mirror, which readily reflects every colour presented to it—only we must beware not to be like the cameleon, which reflects every tint save white. Toleration without purity and candour is dangerous. We do well to take pity on sinners, but rather with a view to drag them out of their ditch than to let them perish in it through mistaken tenderness. It is a perverse compassion which looks on without venturing to help a neighbour from out of the peril of sin, by reaching forth a hand in the shape of a kind but honest remonstrance. One should forbear in all things, 'short of the Altar,' that is to say, short of offending God. This is the limit of all true forbearance. I do not say that one ought to rebuke a sinner under all circumstances—discreet charity waits for a suitable opportunity to apply the required remedy. Impetuous zeal, without wisdom or moderation, does more harm than good. Some people do nothing because they aim at doing too much, and rend asunder that which they seek to unite. One must make haste slowly, and remember the old

saying, 'He who hurries is like to fall.'[1] One must be judicious in reproof, as in forbearance." Certainly, I never saw any one more patient or forbearing than our blessed Father, but when once he had made up his mind to reprove, he did it with such wisdom and decision, such vigour and such gentleness, that no one could resist him.

§ VI. *The power of gentleness.*

I remarked once to an eminent and holy prelate how greatly I admired Francis de Sales' incomparable gentleness, by means of which he accomplished whatever he would. "He does just what he likes," I said, "in such a quiet but powerful way that nothing can stand before him; 'a thousand fall on his left hand, and ten thousand on his right.' Everything gives way to his persuasiveness; he goes straight to his end; you hardly know that he has done anything at all, and lo! it is achieved."

The prelate in question (himself most deeply versed in the science of the Saints and the ways of God) replied, "It is that very gentleness which makes him so powerful; don't you know that pliable steel is far stronger than iron? Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth; they wield all hearts, and all men are drawn by the sweetness of their perfume."

Our dear Father was fond of repeating, "Blessed are the hearts which can bend; they shall never be broken;"[2] of a truth all opposition vanishes before them.

§ VII. *The Bishop's gentleness towards his dependants.*

Francis never uttered a harsh word or a threat to

[1] "Qui marche précipitamment est sujet â tomber."
[2] "Bienheureux sont les cœurs pliables, car ils ne rompront jamais."

a servant; when it was necessary to rebuke a fault, it was done with so much kindliness that the delinquent strove to amend out of love rather than fear.

One day I was talking about this matter with him, and quoted the saying that "familiarity breeds contempt." "Yes," Francis answered, "unseemly, ill-advised familiarity certainly does, but never such as is courteous, sincere, and well timed; this familiarity springs from love, and love begets love; and true love always carries respect with it." "But are we to let our dependants take their own way, and do whatever they please?" I asked. "Not so," he answered; "I only say that where charity rules supreme, it will give due place to discretion, prudence, justice, moderation, and generosity, as well as to humility, abjection, patience, endurance, and gentleness. And what I mean about servants is, that they are our neighbours; brothers whom we are bound in charity to love as ourselves. Let us love these dear neighbours, who are so very near to us, dwelling under the same roof, and eating our bread—let us treat them as ourselves, or rather as we should wish to be treated if we were in their position; this is the best way of treating one's servants. I don't mean that we are to overlook real faults, or to withhold rightful reproof, but at the same time one should acknowledge what is good in them, and encourage them with well-timed approbation, by showing that we have confidence in them, and that one counts them as brothers or friends, whose wants one wishes to supply, and whose interests one would fain promote. One good breeze carries a ship farther than a hundred oars, and so one kind word wins a more willing service than a hundred sharp orders or stern rebukes."

§ VIII. *The Bishop's gentleness towards his dependants.*

Francis had a young servant whose good looks and general amiability induced several *bourgeois* to seek him as a son-in-law. He consulted the Bishop, who said, "My dear fellow, I care for your soul as if it were my own, and I wish you every possible blessing, and would obtain it for you as far as lies in my power; but you are very young, and it seems to me that a man should be older and wiser before he enters upon household cares. Consider this well, because once done, it is too late to repent. Marriage is an order in which profession goes before the novitiate; if there were a year's probation, as in the cloister, we should see fewer professed. After all, why should you wish to leave me? I am old, and not likely to live long; when I die you can settle yourself as you please; I will commend you to my brother, who will do as well for you as any of these men can do." The young man fell at the Bishop's feet, asking to be forgiven for having contemplated leaving him, and protesting that he would cleave to him in life and death.

"Not so, my son," Francis answered, "I would on no account fetter you; I merely give you such friendly counsel as I should give my own brother at your age."

§ IX. *The Bishop's story of a colleague.*

Francis used to tell a story of a brother Bishop who was a very indulgent master, and had at least three times as large a household as he required without being any the better served, though meanwhile the expense thereof hampered him terribly. His relations urged him to dismiss half his establishment at least. This was very distressing

to the Bishop's kind heart; nevertheless, he consented to do so, and a list was given him of all those who were looked upon as superfluous. He sent for these servants, and asked what they meant to do, and was answered with tears that they never looked to find so good a master, and that in leaving him, they lost everything. "What!" exclaimed the worthy Bishop, "am I so necessary to you? Of a truth, then, I cannot follow the advice given me. You must all stay where you are, my children, the one part because I cannot do without them, the others because they cannot do without me. As long as I have bread to eat, we will share it together."

§ X. *The Bishop's special liking for innkeepers.*

Francis had a particular regard for this class of men, who received strangers; he used to say that he knew no way of life in which a man could do more to serve God and his neighbour, and so to win heaven, because it affords such constant opportunities of showing kindness, while at the same time the good done receives its immediate fee as in the case of a physician.

One day after supper, the talk chanced to fall upon innkeepers, and some one said that inns were little better than robbers' dens. The Bishop did not like this, but instead of rebuking the speaker, he turned the conversation by telling us a story. "A certain Spanish pilgrim, with a very slender purse, went to a certain inn, where he was badly lodged, and heavily charged. In his anger and wrath he left the house, which chanced to be exactly opposite another inn, and noticing a crucifix between the two, he vented his displeasure by exclaiming that, as of old, our Lord was placed between two thieves! The innkeeper with whom he had not lodged naturally inquired why he was to

share in so hard a condemnation ; whereupon with ready wit the pilgrim answered, 'Hold your tongue, brother, you shall be the good thief!'"

In travelling Francis forbade his servants to bargain with the innkeepers, and if complaints were made of imposition, he would call attention to the trouble taken and goodwill shown by them. The consequence was that wherever the Bishop was known, all the innkeepers refused to take their bills to his servants, and insisted on referring directly to Francis himself, being certain that he would give them even more than they asked.

§ XI. *His love for the poor.*

Love is not content with merely wishing all that is good for its object; it strives also to do him good, otherwise it would fall under the reproach which S. James makes to those who satisfy their charity with smooth words, and leave the corresponding works undone. Our dear Father's love for the poor was so great that with regard to them he really did "accept persons;" always giving them the preference over the rich, both in things temporal and spiritual, just as physicians care most about those patients whose sickness is most severe.

Once having waited, as did several other people, for him to hear my confession, while he was confessing a poor old blind beggar woman, I ventured to say something about the length of her confession. "I can assure you, she sees the things of God more clearly than many that have their eyesight," was the answer. I remember being on the Lake of Annecy with him one day, when the boatman kept calling him "mon père," and talking very familiarly to him. Francis seemed quite pleased, and said to me, "I do believe these good fellows love me as a father, and how much better I do like to be so called rather than 'Monseigneur.'"

§ XII. *His generosity.*

A certain man who borrowed twelve crowns for a month of the Bishop, instead of repaying him, at the end of a year, came to borrow ten more. The Bishop bade him wait awhile, and then gave him twelve crowns, together with his bond for the former loan. Another man asked the Bishop to lend him twenty crowns; now Francis really had not the means of giving such sums, but in the kindness of his heart, he could not bear to refuse; so, finding that he had ten crowns, he gave those to the petitioner, saying, "We shall each make ten crowns in this way, for I give you these instead of lending you twenty—so that is sheer gain to us both."

§ XIII. *His sympathy.*

To one who had lately lost her sister Francis wrote, "I would not say to you, do not weep—for it is but right that you should weep a little; but let it be a little only, because of the true love you bore her, even as our Dear Lord wept over His friend Lazarus; do not weep to excess, as they do who, fixing their thoughts on the things of this fleeting life, forget that we are hastening towards Eternity, where, if we have dealt rightly with this world, we shall be re-united to those dear ones who are gone before, never again to part. We cannot but feel the separation from the precious companionship we have prized so fondly, but meanwhile we must not forget our solemn pledge in all things to unite our will with that of God." "In truth," he says again, "I weep freely on such occasions; and my heart, which is stony in all heavenly matters, pours forth a flood when touched on its earthly side; yet even so, God be thanked, the flood is not turbid, and I have a strong sense of loving rest in God's Provi-

dence. Since our Dear Lord accepted death with love, and set it before us to be loved, I cannot grudge the death of my sister or of any one else, provided they die in the grace of His Most Holy Death."

And elsewhere Francis says, "No one living has a heart more tender or alive to affection than mine, or one that feels parting more keenly; nevertheless, I do so entirely realise the nothingness of this present life that I never turn to God with a stronger sense of love than when He has given me some blow, or permitted one to fall upon me." If anybody imagines that Christian tenderness and holy resignation are incompatible, they are not like our dear Father. True, all such tenderness springs from a loving heart, and resignation from strength of mind, but there is nothing so strong as that real loving kindness, and nothing so tender as that genuine strength.

§ XIV. *How to bear our neighbour's burden.*

"Bear ye one another's burden, and so fulfil the law of Christ," says the Apostle. If one stone did not uphold another, how could the building stand? Now we are the building of God, raised up of living stones, and unless they uphold one another, it will become a mere heap of stones.

The highest achievement of charity is to love our enemies; but to bear cheerfully with our neighbour's failings is scarcely an inferior grace. It is easy enough to love those who are agreeable and obliging—what fly is not attracted by sugar and honey? but to love one who is cross, perverse, tiresome, is as unpleasant a process as chewing pills.[1] Nevertheless this is the real touchstone of brotherly love. The best way of practising it is to put oneself in the place of him who tries us, and to

[1] "Que de mâcher des pilules!"

see how we should wish him to treat us if we had his defects. One must put oneself in the place of buyer when we sell, and seller when we buy, if we want to deal fairly.

At the worst one must deal with a troublesome neighbour as children swallow physic, with our eyes shut; shut, that is, to the unacceptable brother, but open to God, in and for Whom all is acceptable, since He has made all things, and all His works are perfect. Moses' rod worked wonders in his hand, though when he cast it down it became a serpent: even so, our neighbour is but a mere worm of the earth, but in God's Hand he becomes an instrument whereby we may attain Heaven. "When," exclaims Francis de Sales, "when shall we learn sufficiently to bear with our neighbours? that most precious lesson of the Saints! Blessed is he who hath acquired it. We want to have our burdens borne for us, and we always count them worthy of respect, but we are generally ready to find out that our neighbour's burden is too cumbrous or in some way intolerable and insupportable to us." In such things as are good, envy is prone to make us imagine that our neighbour is better off than ourselves; and in evil things self-love often leads us to consider our own burden heavier than his. As to defects, we have an eagle's eye for our brother's shortcomings, while we are very moles with respect to our own.

§ XV. *Importunity.*

The Bishop prized patience under importunity very highly. "A little gentleness, moderation, and modesty are all we want for that," he would say. Some think that patience only applies to the endurance of such ills as will bring us credit; but these occasions come but seldom, and while we wait for them we miss many smaller ones, and despise for-

bearance under vexatious importunity—perhaps even count those weak who bear patiently with it. We fancy that our patience could endure great strain and trial, while we give way to impatience under very trifling provocations : we think we could nurse a neighbour in grievous sickness, but we cannot put up with his ill-temper, his awkwardness or incivility, above all with his importunity when he worries us in season and out of season with talk about matters which we count as absurd or trivial. Then we make excuses for our impatience on the ground of loss of time (the only thing, an old writer says, of which we may be miserly), forgetting that we spend time in many a pursuit which is more unprofitable than forbearance towards a neighbour, perhaps even of less importance than the subject with which he is boring us so grievously.

When called into society one ought to try to be pleased, and to show that one is pleased ; when alone, one may enjoy solitude, but unfortunately human inconsistency leads us often to sigh for solitude when we are in the company of others, and to pine for conversation when we are alone. The wise and reasonable thing is to enjoy recreation in due season, as to enjoy study, prayer, silence, and work at their appointed times. "I will alway bless the Lord, and His praise shall ever be in my mouth." Those alway bless the Lord who perform every action, however trifling and indifferent, with reference to Him and His praise.

§ XVI. *Reproof.*

There is one maxim concerning reproof administered to others which our dear Father impressed strongly upon my mind, as valuable to all, but especially so to those who bear any rule over others. "Truth which is not charitable," he said, "springs

from a charity which is not true." A most forcible saying, worthy to be accepted and pondered.

The Bishop had learnt through sundry credible witnesses that in the early days of my episcopate I was much too sharp and unmeasured in my zeal, that I was often most indiscreet in rebuking, and that my words were rough and harsh. One day he took me aside, and with his usual wisdom and gentleness, impressed his rules upon me so forcibly that I have never forgotten them. "Those who are in authority," he said, "are unquestionably bound to correct the faulty, but when they have to tell unpalatable truths, these should be so softened with charity and kindness as to take away all sting, otherwise the result will be very imperfect, and the rebuke will fail of its intended effect. You may take it as a sure sign that your charity is not genuine, if your words, however true, are not charitable."

§ XVII. *How to test the charity of our reproofs.*

I asked our dear Father once how one could know whether one's reproofs spring from charity? He replied, with his wonted good judgment, "That truth springs from charity, which is told solely out of love of God and for his good who is reproved."[1] Words not to be forgotten, as touching the real aim and end of all our actions, since it is of the very essence of charity to be totally disinterested. All other virtues stop short in the welfare of creatures, but charity alone, as the Apostle tells us, seeks the good of that which it loves supremely (which is God), and of that which has ultimate reference to Him.

Consequently, if one man reproves another for

[1] "Ideo debemus amando corripere, non nocendi aviditate, sed studio corrigendi. . . . Si amore tui id facis, nil facis. Si amore illius facis, optime facis."—S. Aug. Serm. xvi. *De Verbis Domini.*

any other end than God's Honour, and the good of him who is reproved, the reproof does not spring from charity. It is better to withhold a rebuke than to give it unreasonably. Such a reproof is like good food spoilt in cooking, or medicine not adapted to the disease. If you ask, Is it not unjust to be silent? I answer no; the injustice would be in speaking, because the very essence of all true justice is charity, and a judicious silence is always to be preferred to uncharitable truth.

§ XVIII. *How to test the charity of our reproofs.*

Another time, in reply to a somewhat similar question, our dear Father said that the test of a charitable reproof was if it be given, as S. Paul says, "in the spirit of meekness." Meekness is inseparable from charity: S. Paul teaches us this when he says that charity is "kind and long-suffering." God, Who is Love, guides the gentle-hearted, and teaches His Own ways to the meek. His Spirit is not in the whirlwind, the storm, or the rushing mighty waters, but in a still small whispering Voice. Francis recommended us to imitate the good Samaritan, who poured oil and wine into the wounds he sought to heal. It was a frequent saying of his that it takes more oil than vinegar and salt to make a good salad. Another of his favourite sayings was, "Always be as indulgent as you can, remembering that one can catch more flies with a spoonful of honey than with a hundred barrels of vinegar. If you must exceed on one or the other side, let it be on that of indulgence. No sauce was ever spoiled by sugar. The human mind is so constituted that it hardens itself against severity, but kindness makes it pliable. A gentle word soothes anger just as water puts out fire, and there is no soil so barren but that tenderness brings forth some fruit. He who can speak the truth lovingly throws hot coals upon his neigh-

bour, or more truly, roses. Who can be angry with those whose only weapons are pearls and diamonds! Nothing is so bitter as unripe fruit, but when preserved, it is sweet and palatable. So reproof is naturally bitter, but mixed with the sugar of kindness, and heated by the fire of charity, it becomes cordial, gracious, and acceptable."

"But," I answered, "truth must always be truth, however given or taken;" and I quoted S. Paul's words to Timothy: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine."

"Yes," Francis replied, "but the gist of the apostolic precept lies in those two words, *long-suffering* and *doctrine*. Doctrine means truth, and truth should always be told patiently. I mean we should be prepared to see it rejected, and not expect that it will always be welcome. The Son of God was ever subject to opposition, and His Truth will meet the same lot. Every man who seeks to lead others in the path of righteousness must make up his mind to bear their inconsistency and injustice, and to receive no reward save ingratitude."

§ XIX. *Loving rebuke a proof of friendship.*

This dear Father used often to rebuke me for my faults, saying, "I expect you to be very grateful to me for this; it is the greatest proof I can give of my friendship, and I should be more sure of yours for me if you would do the like; but you are very lukewarm on this score; you are much too cautious. Real love goes boldly on, without hesitating so much about details. I love you so well that I cannot endure the least imperfection in you; I want my son to be 'blameless,' as S. Paul bade his son Timothy strive to be. A surgeon who lets a man die from lack of firmness to probe his wound would be thought cruel rather than compassionate, and a

sharp correction is sometimes as necessary for the soul's welfare as the knife for that of the diseased body. There are times when life may be saved by letting blood, and in like manner a seasonable reproof may save a soul."

§ XX. *Rash judgments.*

Man sees but the outside; only God sees that which is within. He Alone fathoms the heart and knows every thought. Our dear Father used to say that our neighbour's soul is as a tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which we are forbidden to touch under pain of punishment, because God reserves all such judgment to Himself. He often used to comment upon the inconsistency which makes us so ready to pronounce judgment on what we know nothing about—the inner mind of others; while we avoid passing judgment on that with which we are, or ought to be, familiar—our own inner selves. The first is forbidden, the last enjoined us. Talking of this subject, the Bishop told a story of a certain woman, who, after having disobeyed her husband in everything all her life, ended by drowning herself in the river. Her husband was found looking for her body against the stream, and when his friends remonstrated, he answered, "Don't you suppose that she still retains her old spirit of contradiction?"

Some one asked if it is wrong to entertain well-founded suspicions? The answer was, "No; because to suspect is not to judge, only a step towards it. But we should be very careful not to be misled by false indications, and so to form hasty judgments; this is the rock upon which many a rash judgment splits." To avoid this error Francis had an excellent rule, namely, that if any action could be seen under a hundred different aspects, one ought always to select that one which is most favourable. If we

cannot find any excuse for the act itself we may lessen its evil character by imputing some good intention ; and if there is nothing to be said on that score, we should take into consideration the violence of temptation, or attribute it to ignorance, sudden assault, or human frailty, so as to take away what we can from the inevitable blame involved. Francis used to say that people who keep a strict watch over their own conscience seldom fall into the snare of rashly judging others : it is a habit which rather belongs to idle men, who take little heed of their own actions, while they are very much addicted to picking to pieces those of their neighbours. It is, as an old writer has said, the peculiarity of those who are diligent in criticising others to be very negligent in correcting their own faults.

§ XXI. *Think no evil.*

The Bishop objected to pronouncing any one to be wicked on account of a single bad action. "Good habits are not destroyed by one act of a contrary nature," he would say ; "nor is it fair to call a man intemperate because of one act of intemperance, or the like." He was wont to point out the difference between vice and sin—one being a habit, the other an act. As one swallow does not make summer, so neither does it necessarily follow from one act of sin that a man is vicious, *i.e.* habitually given to the sin he has committed. Some one observed that neither ought we hastily to pronounce any one to be living in grace and charity, however holy his outward actions might appear. To this Francis replied that if, as S. James tells us, faith is known by its works, far more true is it of charity, which is a more active virtue ; its works prove its existence, as sparks show where there is fire ; and although in case of mortal sin we are constrained to admit that the sinner has forfeited grace, how can

we say but that God may have touched his heart within the next moment, and that an act of contrition may not already have brought him back to the narrow road? Ever be slow to think evil of others, but use all freedom on the other side, because charity hopeth all things, believeth all things, and rejoiceth not in iniquity but in the truth.

§ XXII. *The Bishop's ingenuity in excusing others.*

I once complained of certain petty gentlefolk in the neighbourhood, who, although they were as poor as Job, were likewise full of pretension, and for ever boasting of their high birth and the deeds of their ancestors. Francis turned round upon me in his graceful way, saying, "Would you strip these poor people of everything? If they are rich in dignities, it will help them to forget their actual poverty; like the young Athenian whose insanity took the form of fancying himself the richest man in Greece, and who when he was cured, prosecuted his friends for depriving him of so pleasing a delusion! Real nobility accepts reverses courageously, and rises against the pressure of circumstances. Would to God that they had no greater fault! What I lament most is the miserable, detestable habit of duelling which prevails amongst these men," he added, sighing.

On one occasion, very urgent complaint and invective was raised in Francis' presence against a member of a certain community who had been guilty of a very scandalous fault, which nevertheless was one of infirmity. The Bishop said nothing save at intervals, "Human misery! mortal weakness!" "Truly we are compassed about with infirmities! What can such as we are do save fall?" "We should do worse perhaps if God did not uphold us with His Right Hand."

§ XXIII. *Holiness better than learning.*

Learning is a great addition to holiness, as we see in the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, who united the two; but if it is necessary to choose between them, everybody would prefer a good conscience to the most profound learning; charity to knowledge, "which puffeth up." One day a certain pastor was praised before Francis for his holy life, but at the same time censured for his lack of learning. The Bishop observed at last, "Truly learning and piety are as the eyes of an ecclesiastic, but men are admitted to Holy Orders who have only the use of one eye, specially if that be the canonical eye; and even so a Curé may be very admirable in his ministry, if he has his canonical eye, by which I mean an exemplary, well-regulated life." "There is a degree of ignorance," he went on to say, "so gross as to be inexcusable, and which results in the blind leading the blind, but when a man is spoken of as holy, it must mean that he possesses the true light which leads to Jesus Christ; and if he has no great erudition or eloquence in the pulpit, it will suffice that he teach wholesome doctrine and recall them that stray from the right way. Remember how God taught the Prophet Balaam by the mouth of his ass. An ounce of good living is worth many pounds of knowledge which puffs up."

§ XXIV. *His hopefulness concerning sinners.*

The Bishop's kind heart made him unable to think ill even of the bad; if their faults were too open and heinous to be palliated, he would take refuge in the hope that they would yet be converted, saying, "What are we, that we should judge our brethren? But for God's Grace, I should have done worse, and my soul might ere this have been

cast into hell." "There are twenty-four hours in the day, and each one has its own burden. The greatest sinners are sometimes the truest penitents, to wit David and others, whose repentance has been more edifying than their sin was scandalous. God can raise up sons of Abraham from the stones, and turn those who were vessels of wrath into vessels of glory."

He would never despair of a sinner's conversion so long as he lived, saying that this life is a pilgrimage, in which those who stand may easily fall, and those who have fallen, may, by God's Grace, rise again. Indeed, Francis went further still, and even after death would not allow any judgment to be passed upon those who had led an evil life, unless their condemnation was manifest from Holy Scripture. In all other cases he maintained that we have no right to pry into the secrets of God, which He has reserved to His Own Wisdom and Power. "Grace to begin with is not given by reason of man's merit," he said, "nor does final perseverance, the last grace of all, depend upon any such merit. Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or, being His counsellor, hath taught Him?"[1] He always strove to hope, even for those who had to all outward appearance made a bad end, on the ground that we cannot judge from the exterior side of things. I remember his quoting a preacher, who, alluding to a notorious heretic, said that he could not venture to speak of him as lost, for who could say but that in his last moments he might have recognised the faith he had denied, and have died a true penitent? "The sermon riveted us," Francis said, "and the preacher concluded by saying, 'How immeasurable is the Goodness of God! Jesus Christ offered peace, love, and salvation to the traitor who betrayed Him with a kiss, why may He not have done the like to this heretic? Is the Lord's Arm shortened

[1] Isa. xl. 13.

that it cannot save? Is He less pitiful than of old?'"

§ XXV. *Love of our enemies.*

One for whom Francis had a great regard said once to him that nothing seemed more difficult than to love one's enemies. "I don't know how my heart was made," he answered, "or whether it has pleased God to give me a new one, but I have no difficulty in obeying this precept; on the contrary, it is so attractive to me that if we were forbidden to love our enemies I should find it hard to obey."

A person having once outraged him grievously, the Bishop strove to appease him with untold gentleness, and finally said, "In short, if you tear out one of my eyes, I shall still look at you as my very dear friend with the other."

"We cannot do this without some slight struggle against the flesh," he added, "but after all one must remember David's words, 'Be ye angry and sin not.' What are we that we should not be able to bear with those whom God bears with; contemplating as we do our Dear Lord praying on the Cross for His enemies? We have not been crucified or persecuted to the death; we have not resisted unto blood. Who would not love that enemy for whom Christ prayed, nay, for whom He died? for He prayed not for those alone who crucified Him, but for all those who persecute Him in His servants, even as He taught us when asking Saul, 'Wherefore persecutest thou Me?' *i.e.* in My members. I do not mean that we ought to love our enemy's sin, or the hatred that he bears to us, which are alike displeasing to God, but we must distinguish between the sin and the sinner, if we would be like unto our Lord. Little fires are soon extinguished by the wind, but it feeds greater flames; the best fish come out of salt water, and the best souls are

trained amid contradiction, the waters of which cannot quench love; they rather raise the soul towards God, even as the waters of the Deluge raised the ark to the top of the mountains."

§ XXVI. *A mother's mercy.*

Francis used to tell the story of an occurrence which happened at Padua, where the students were wont to indulge in wild doings enough. A certain student having killed a young man one dark night, took refuge in the house of a widow, whose son was his friend, telling her what he had done, and begging her to conceal him. Soon afterwards the dead body of her son was brought home, and there was no doubt as to who was his murderer. Horrified at having killed his friend, the student threw himself on his knees before his hostess, offering himself up to justice, but this deeply Christian woman was so touched by his grief and penitence that she refused to make his guilt known, on condition that he would henceforth lead a new life. This mercy on her part was so pleasing to God that He allowed her to see her son in a dream, who told her that in virtue of her forgiveness his soul had been granted a speedy entrance into Paradise. "Blessed are the merciful," for they shall obtain mercy for themselves and for others.

§ XXVII. *Dislikes.*

There are some people who, by the help of God's Grace, have succeeded in forcibly uprooting emotions of hatred towards those who have injured them; while yet, even as the roots of a tree cleave to the ground after the trunk is cut down, so dislike and aversion hold him tight who has set himself free from hatred; and these are all the harder to conquer that they seem less culpable than hate.

We know that we are bound to forgive our enemies, if we would be forgiven of God; we say it daily in the Lord's Prayer, but just as the sea heaves restlessly after a great storm, so some men who have renounced hate, are content with saying that they wish no ill to its former object, forgetting that the Law of Jesus Christ requires more than that; it requires us to love him. Or others, while pardoning an enemy, and even wishing his prosperity and his welfare, yet cannot bring themselves to see or speak with him, lest their wrath be stirred up anew. There is something plausible in this excuse when we remember that human weakness is as frail as a reed bending with every wind; but such mistrust will hardly be accepted by God, Who would have us rejoice in Him with fear and trust in Him in proportion to our mistrust of self. He would have us humble but not discouraged, leaning wholly upon His Grace, in no way upon ourselves. This is what Holy Scripture teaches us when it says that we can do nothing as of ourselves, but that our sufficiency is of God; without Him we can do nothing, in Him all things, even remove mountains; so that believing Him to have begun the good work in us, we must hope that He will accomplish it. Thus if He has given us grace sincerely to forgive an enemy, and to wish him well, we ought to have confidence that God will enable us to resist all the temptations with which the devil tries the lower part of our nature at the sight of that enemy. Some, granting this, will say, "I am willing to meet him, but I cannot speak to him, lest I should break forth into reproach, and so rekindle the mischief." Of a truth, when one lately recovered from fever complains of urgent thirst, we judge that the fever heat has not wholly left his veins; and when those who have come out of the Egyptian land of hatred cast back longing looks, there is probably some secret bitterness yet lingering in their hearts. But it

behoves all such to take their heart in both hands, and tear out their aversion with hearty vigour, praying God to help their weakness, and teach them to "do good to those that hate them," and to "overcome evil with good." The heathen love those that love them; Christians surely should love those who do not return their love, even those towards whom they feel the strongest natural dislike.

§ XXVIII. *Reconciliation.*

Francis disliked the maxim that one should never trust a reconciled enemy. He held to the opposite view, saying that disagreement between friends ought to strengthen their bonds, comparing these to oil poured on a furnace, which quickens the flame. We have often been told by surgeons that a broken limb when well set becomes stronger than its fellow which has never been injured, and rarely breaks again in the same place.

Those who have been reconciled sometimes become greater friends than before, and strive to atone for past offences by present services, carefully avoiding any future ill. Princes are wont to keep stricter watch over a city retaken, than over such as have never fallen into an enemy's hands.

§ XXIX. *The outer show of goodwill.*

It has been asked whether outer signs of goodwill given against the grain to those for whom we have a natural dislike, are not hypocrisy and falsehood, inasmuch as they are different from what we really feel in our hearts? The answer is obvious if we distinguish between the feeling and reasoning parts of the soul. Dislike belongs to the first, and it is no hypocrisy to act according to the other and superior part of the soul, all the more that such action proves the empire of reason over the senses;

this is that holy violence which takes Heaven by storm, and is most acceptable to God, whereas He abhors duplicity, and all that is contrary to singleness of the heart.

"But," you say, "if those to whom we show these signs of goodwill knew of these inward struggles, what would they think?"

I answer, Pay less attention to man's judgment than to that of God. If men judge according to the flesh they ought to pity our wretchedness, and the rebellion of our senses against the reasoning faculty of our souls; but if they judge after God's judgment their judgment will surely be favourable to us, even as that of God Who knows the secrets of our heart.

One ounce of such a strong reasonable love is worth more than a hundred pounds of mere feeling, which we have in common with the brute creation, and which often betrays our higher nature into falls. Whatever we do for God's Sake with repugnance proves that His Grace is strengthening the higher portion of our nature;—we ought to be suspicious of what we do for Him with pleasure to ourselves, especially when it regards our neighbour: a field in which there are many snares to lure us from the pure love of God, such as sympathy, complaisance, interest, liking, which are so many thieves who steal God from us, so that having begun with the Spirit, we end according to the flesh.

Our senses are like Dalilah, who lulled Samson to sleep that she might shear his locks. There is no harm in loving one who is acceptable to us in God, so long as we love him rather for God's Sake than because he pleases us; but inasmuch as it is difficult, not to say impossible, to look upon a mirror without seeing oneself, and seeing oneself without taking pleasure therein, so that ere long we forget the mirror and think first of our reflection, then of ourselves, so it is very difficult not to have

respect to self in the love borne to a neighbour; whereas pure love requires us to love him solely in and for God, that is to say, because God is in him, or may become so.

§ XXX. *Justice.*

Francis used to say that he who would be just must put himself into the place of a purchaser when selling, and of a seller when buying, for no injustice is so prevalent in the world as that which strives to get the most for what it gives, and give the least for all it gets; whence all manner of frauds and deceits dishonour our commerce. He often said, "Justice has long been handcuffed and lost the use of one arm;" and that because it seems as if virtue no longer had any reward, although vice is still punished.

§ XXXI. *Justice and judicature.*

The Bishop distinguished between justice and judicature; between a man of justice, and a man of judicature. The first is a just, equitable person of any position in life; the other is a magistrate or officer whose business it is to do justice to others according to the law. Unfortunately the formalities of the law are like bad daughters who have smothered their parent; they were originally invented with a view to giving every one his right in law and equity, but by the lapse of years and man's subtlety they have become more a means for grasping at what is not ours, and meanwhile for enriching the official bystanders. There is a proverb, Where two contend, the third profits.

Like the heathen emperor who complained that he was dying from the quantity of remedies given him, one may say that the multitude of our laws and formalities suffocate justice, and that those

who get entangled therein are like silkworms who spin their own tomb.

Francis used to quote David, "Justitia conversa est in judicium," saying that the suburbs of a town are often longer than it is itself; that the land of law is a land "which devours the inhabitants thereof," and wherein Samson's foxes burn up all harvests.

CHAPTER XI.

ON RECREATION AND SOCIETY.

§ I. *How Francis used everything as a means to draw nearer to God.*

THE Bishop never took any recreation for his own pleasure, only out of kindness to others. He had no garden to either of the houses he inhabited during his episcopate, and he never went out for recreation except to accompany his friends, or when it was ordered on account of his health, in which case he was very obedient to the doctor's orders.

S. Carlo Borromeo used the like strictness, and he could not bear people to waste his time after meals in useless conversation, saying that it was not seemly for the pastor of so weighty and important a diocese, who had so many claims to fulfil. People were accustomed to his cutting short such seasons, in order that he might return to his incessant labours.

Our dear Father was more indulgent, and did not shun conversation after meals. When I stayed with him, he used to take pains to procure rest and recreation for me after I had been preaching. He would go on the Lake of Annecy with me himself, or into the pleasant gardens which border its shores ; and when he came to see me at Belley, he did not refuse to share similar recreations, though he would never have proposed them himself. If conversation fell upon architecture, painting, music, hunting, birds, plants, flowers, or gardens, he found no fault with those who sought interest therein,

only he would fain have all such occupations so used as to become means of raising the soul to God, as indeed was his own habit in all things. Thus the sight of flourishing plants led him to liken our souls to the field God cultivates; a church or other building are temples of the living God; "Would that our souls may be meet for His Indwelling!" If he gazed on beautiful flowers, he would say, "When shall we bring forth our fruit in due season?" or if he saw an exquisite picture, "What is so lovely as a soul formed in the image of God!"

As Francis walked in a garden, he would say, "When will the garden of our souls be duly filled with flowers and fruits, well kept, trim, clear from whatever is unworthy of our Divine Gardener?" Passing a fountain, "When will our hearts be filled with living waters? How long shall we neglect the fountain of life, and hew out for ourselves broken cisterns? When shall we drink freely as we will from the well of salvation?"

Looking upon a fertile valley, he observed, "It is pleasant and fruitful, and well watered; even so the waters of grace flow into humble souls, while they leave the high mountains, that is the proud at heart, dry." Crossing the mountains, he would quote the Psalms, "I will lift up mine eyes to the hills, from whence cometh my help; the high hills are a refuge for the wild goat; the hills stand about Jerusalem, even so standeth the Lord round about His people; O ye mountains and hills, bless ye the Lord!"

And amid the forest, "Every tree that beareth not good fruit shall be rooted up." "A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit." Crossing a river, "How souls flow towards God, even as the stream to the sea." And on the lake, "O Lord, deliver us from the depths of sin." Everything brought God before his thoughts, or, to speak more truly, he habitually thought of naught save God.

§ II. *The Bishop's "sad time."*

The Carnival was always a sorrowful time to him, by reason of that disorder and licence which sometimes carried away even those who were habitually stedfast in good ways. He was scandalised at the retention of this bacchanalian heathen festival among Christians, which has brought many a reproach upon the Church, as though she encouraged or permitted what she simply cannot hinder, and against which she has ever raised her voice in warning and justice. Francis bemoaned it "as a sparrow on the housetop, or as a pelican in the wilderness."

"This is indeed my sad time," he wrote; "from Epiphany till Lent I have strange thoughts in my heart. Weak and wretched as I myself am, I am filled with grief at seeing so much ground lost, so many souls slipping backward. These two last Sundays, our communions have diminished one half, which has pained me deeply; even if those who keep away do not become wicked, why should they leave off doing that which is good, for nothing but mere idleness and vanity? Is it not grievous?"

The holy Bishop recommended those who frequented balls to remember that while they were dancing there were souls suffering in hell by reason of the sins they had committed through dancing; as also that at that same moment many religious and other pious people were praying and praising God; that men and women innumerable were lying on beds of sickness, writhing in anguish, or passing for ever out of this world to the next; "as one day," he added, "it will be yours to pass away, while others in their turn are dancing and amusing themselves. Our Lord, His Blessed Mother, the Saints, and Angels see you. Think you not that they look pitifully on your heart, if it is engrossed

with such frivolities? While you are frittering away your time thus idly, death is drawing hourly nearer, and will soon summon you to join its grim dance, which leads mortals to an eternity of good or evil."

Francis used to tell the story of a profligate youth whom he had known while a student at Paris, who returning from a night's debauch heard the bells of the Chartreuse ringing for matins. He asked a companion what the bells meant, and being told, he could not refrain from drawing a comparison between the devil's rites he had been following and those of the holy monks. The next day he went to see if what he had been told was true, and finding the good religious in their stalls, wholly absorbed in their office, he was smitten with repentance and admiration, and was converted both to a better life and to the Faith, for he was a heretic previously.

§ III. *Society and conversation.*

Some men, more zealous than enlightened, fancy that when they would learn to be devout, it is necessary to shun all society and intercourse with others, as owls fly from the sunshine, and thus by their unsociable conduct they disgust men with that religion which they ought to set before their neighbour in an attractive light. Our dear Father disapproved of this, wishing rather that really devout people should become the light of the world by their winning example, and the salt of the earth, inspiring others with a taste for true devotion.

Some one remarked in reply to such a remark that even salt melts and is lost in the ocean whence it issued, if it mingle again with its former source.

"Quite true," Francis said, "but nevertheless, unless you put salt into our food, it will be savourless."

A worthy person asked him whether those who

aim at any degree of perfection can safely keep up intercourse with the world?

"Perfection," he replied, "does not consist in ignoring the world, but in not delighting in or seeking it. The only thing to be feared in looking upon it, is lest you learn to love it, but if you are brave and resolute the sight will do you no harm. In short, a perfect life means perfect charity, for charity is the life of the soul; the early Christians belonged to the world outwardly but not in heart, and certainly they attained a high perfection."

§ IV. *Fraternal correction.*

There are some weak minds which take umbrage at everything; they fear at every step to tread upon an adder, and their shrinking fastidiousness perpetually fancies itself wounded or poisoned. Whatever is said before them, of which they do not approve, seems to become their own fault, whether they have consented or not. But inasmuch as temptations cannot injure us so long as they are resisted, how can we be to blame for the faults of others, in which we have taken no part or pleasure?

"But is not fraternal correction enjoined as well as recommended?"

"It is certainly a duty in certain people and under certain circumstances; for instance, superiors are bound to reprove those who are set under them, but that with all long-suffering and doctrine, and even inferiors are bound to do the like in all modesty and humility, where there is a hope of amendment, otherwise there is no sin in not attempting to correct our brethren. It is a proof of indiscreet zeal and lack of judgment to rebuke everything one hears which is deserving of rebuke."

To one who was disturbed on this score, our dear Father wrote, "When in society be at rest concerning what is said and done. If it is right, bless God

for it; if wrong, you can still serve Him by turning away in heart, without affecting surprise or annoyance, where you can do no good, and are unable to hinder what is objectionable. In this way, you may preserve your innocence amid the poison of asps, just as a fruit remains sweet although its roots have been surrounded with manure." It is not always necessary to rebuke what is wrong; sometimes it is even inexpedient, for fear of increasing the mischief; that which is postponed need not be lost, and sometimes an unseasonable remedy increases the disease. Injudicious zeal is as a physician who needs to be healed himself before he can minister to others.

§ V. *Our words.*

Words indicate what a man is; the tongue is guided by the heart. If you want to know whether a man's judgment is sound and his intentions good, give heed to his talk, watch his words, and however well concealed, you will find out the truth. Physicians judge of their patient's condition by looking at his tongue. We judge of the roots of a tree by its leaves and fruits; and in like manner our words indicate the state of our conscience, for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Francis used to say that if one could repress sins of the tongue, a third part of the world's sins would be done away with. S. James says, "If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body"

§ VI. *Taciturnity.*

Some people are naturally taciturn; in others silence arises from pride, stupidity, or depression. Very few people keep silence as a virtue, that is to say out of discretion and good judgment.

Mention was made before the Bishop of a certain person who hoped to be taken for a wise man by reason of his silence. "In that case, he has found the way to get a good name cheap," Francis said, adding after a pause, "Nothing is so like a wise man as a fool who holds his tongue." However, mere silence is not wisdom, which consists rather in knowing when and how to speak, when and where to be silent. Before a habit of silence can be really good, one must learn equally to avoid either extreme.

§ VII. *How to speak of God.*

The Bishop used to say, "Never speak of God or those subjects which appertain to Him and His holy religion carelessly, or as mere topics of conversation; but always with the greatest reverence and affection." And again, "Always speak of God as God, by which I mean with reverence and piety, not pompously and as if you were preaching, but in a spirit of gentleness, charity, and humility." He explained the first injunction to be intended for those who talk about religious matters as they would about any other subject, regardless of time, place, or person, for mere talking's sake; an evil of which S. Jerome complained even in his day, saying that every art and science had its own professors who only were thought competent to speak thereof, while theology and Holy Scripture alone were so carelessly treated that every one discussed these weighty matters at table, in public and private; young and old, educated and ignorant, giving their crude opinions upon the most exalted mysteries of the Faith. His second precept Francis designed for people who aim at appearing learned and profoundly versed in piety and mysticism, who maintain their own opinion warmly, eagerly, obstinately, sometimes angrily; who are often much louder in their assertions than those who know more, but

who have a calmer head and gentler voice, as though noisy declamation added any strength whatsoever to an argument! "Let all conversation about God and holy things be reverent and earnest," Francis said, "and specially avoid that affectation which some have of constantly using sacred expressions in a mere conventional unreflecting manner, not thinking really of what they say, perhaps supposing that words will do as well as actions—a grievous mistake."

§ VIII. *Evil speaking.*

Our dear Father often said that whoever could banish evil speaking would get rid of a great part of the world's sinfulness. All sins come under the head of thought, word, and deed; and faults in word are the commonest and often the most dangerous for several reasons. First, because sins of thought only injure oneself, and give no scandal or bad example to others: God Alone sees and is displeased at them, and moreover, a loving repentance and ready turning to Him blots them out; whereas sins of the tongue go further; the evil word once uttered can only be recalled by a humble retractation, and even then a brother's heart may have been poisoned by it. Again, notorious acts of sin are liable to public punishment; but evil speaking, unless extraordinarily gross and slanderous, is subject to no such check. Thirdly, sins of the tongue are specially dangerous because people do so little in the way of restitution or reparation for them. Those who have the guidance of souls are usually much too indulgent, not to say lax, in this particular.

§ IX. *Charity in words.*

Mention was made in the Bishop's presence of the

grievous fall of a well-born maiden. "It is very remarkable," he said, "how zealous everybody is about purity, and meanwhile how little zeal is shown for a pure charity." When pressed to explain himself, Francis did so by saying: "Everybody is jealous on behalf of purity; even those who do not practise it can praise it, and press it upon others; and in truth it is a precious treasure which closely concerns our public and private welfare. But would to God that we had as much zeal for a pure charity—by which I mean keeping intact that virtue which is the queen, the mother, the very soul, of all other virtues, without which they are worthless and dead before God. Yet there is so much impure, unreal charity among us; a charity, I mean, which offends God and man while affecting to be very sincere; a refined treason which betrays the betrayer himself! I have often said that zeal is a dangerous virtue, because so few people know how to use it rightly. Many are like bad workmen who break half the slates with which they undertake to roof a house. There is no way of attaining a pure and perfect charity save by looking to God in all, and seeing all things through Him. This is the pure charity for which we ought to be jealous with a godly jealousy, as S. Paul says." Talking thus, Francis turned the conversation from a painful subject which was displeasing to God, inasmuch as it involved speaking evil of a neighbour.

§ X. *Contradiction.*

There are no more unpleasant members of society than those persons who are obstinate, perverse, and perpetually contradicting all that is said; they are the pest of society, and give rise to half the quarrels that take place; whereas gentle conciliatory people, who are ready to give way, have an ever present charm which wins every one. Our dear Father

delighted in S. Louis' advice—never to contradict any one unless it was plainly wrong to refrain from doing so. The pious King did not say this out of mere earthly sagacity, or on the principle which made a heathen Emperor say that no one should leave his prince's presence dissatisfied; but from a really Christian desire to avoid all strife and dispute.

"Is it not conniving at sin, and so making oneself a partaker in it, if one does not oppose what is wrong when possible?"

"If it is really necessary to contradict any one," Francis answered, "or to set one's own opinion up in opposition to theirs, it should be done with the greatest skill and care, so as not to irritate: one gains nothing by being sharp or rough. If you exasperate a horse with the curb, he will take the bit between his teeth, and run away with his rider; but let the reins hang loosely, do not fret him, and he will let you do what you will. It is just the same with men's minds; if you press a man, you soon oppress him, he resists, and all goes wrong. Men must be persuaded, not forced; to constrain any one is to force him into rebellion; but gentleness wins him, and he yields forthwith."

§ XI. *Ridicule.*

When in society, if Francis heard any one ridiculed he always showed by his manner that the conversation displeased him, and he did not fail to turn it as soon as possible. If this did not succeed he would rise and say, "This is too much, it is not fair; what right have we to amuse ourselves in this way at another's expense? Should we like to be treated in the same way, and to have our failings dissected with the tongue's sharp point? It is a great sign of perfection to bear with the imperfections of others, and a great fault to hold them up to the light of ridicule."

Francis said once that to be given to ridicule is one of the worst mental conditions a man can be in, for God hates the vice, and punishes it severely. A young lady once ridiculed another for her natural defects in his presence. Francis at first quietly told her that God made us each, not we ourselves, and that all God's works are perfect; but as she still persisted, he silenced her by saying, "Believe me, the lady in question has a most well-formed and beautiful soul, and I know well what I am talking about."

Another time some people were laughing at an absent person who was very much deformed. Francis quoted the same assertion of holy writ, that all God's works are perfect. "How can one so imperfect be called perfect?" he was asked. "Do you not think that there may be perfection among the deformed as well as elsewhere?" he answered, and then he added: "But enough of this, let us turn to some more profitable subject."

§ XII. *The Bishop's playfulness.*

One day the Bishop came upon some volumes in my library, written by a very learned man, but in so unintelligible a style, that the cleverest readers could make nothing of it. Some one had written in fun upon the first page "*Fiat lux.*" Francis de Sales was very much amused at this, and he tried for some time to see whether he could bite the hard biscuit; but failing utterly, he said at last in his pleasant way, "This good man has given several books to the public, but I cannot say that he has brought one to the light! It is a pity to be so learned that one cannot express oneself;—rather less knowledge and a happy expression would certainly be more profitable."

§ XIII. *A playful rebuke.*

Several fine ladies came to the Bishop after one of his sermons in Paris, each one ready primed with some question;—one asked one thing, one another, everybody talked at once! At last Francis, finding himself unable to hear anybody, said, "I will answer all your questions, if you will first answer one for me. When everybody talks and nobody listens, what is to be done?" All the ladies hung their heads abashed, and total silence prevailed, just as a whole pond full of frogs is hushed when you throw a stone among them!

§ XIV. *Sincerity.*

Francis detested the old saying that "one should love as who may some day hate, and hate as who may some day love."

"The second clause of this most worldly maxim is the most tolerable," he said, "for it is better to look forward to renewing a friendship than to foster an irreconcilable hatred, which is really diabolical. It is consistent with human frailty to get angry; but not to be able to forgive is an odious and execrable thing. Hating as likely some day to love has at least a tendency towards reconciliation."

Some one asked him one day what he understood by sincerity? "Exactly the sound of the word," Francis answered, "*sans cire*."[1]

"I am just as wise as before!" was the reply.

"You know what honey without (*sans cire*) wax is? how clear and pure? And so it is when a mind is quite free from all duplicity—how sincere, frank, cordial; how open, and free from all back-door doings.[2] Sincere people are good friends, but a double-minded man is uncertain in all his ways;

[1] A play upon the word "*sincère*."
[2] "Sans porte de derrière."

he mistrusts every one, and every one mistrusts him—a true Ishmael, his hand is against every man, and every man's hand against him. His tongue is a two-edged sword, and when he speaks of peace, he ponders mischief in his heart."

§ XV. *Falsehood.*

You ask how to understand our dear Father's words, "that we can rarely speak the smallest untruth without injuring our neighbour"?

Perhaps the word "*rarely*" solves your difficulty; but we may also safely say that every falsehood, however trifling it may seem, does injure ourselves or others; it invariably wounds purity and uprightness, and every man who tells a lie, even in joke, proves that he is double-minded—not "single in heart;" and we know that a lying tongue is the Lord's abomination, and that He will destroy the lying lips and deceitful tongue. Let your speech be simple, straightforward, honest and true, if you would be children of Him Who is the Father of Truth, and Very Truth itself.

§ XVI. *Equivocation.*

Francis de Sales abhorred the whole system of equivocation, which he used to call an attempt to canonise falsehood. "He that walketh uprightly walketh surely," the Wise Man says.[1] Falsehood, deceit, and dissimulation are sure tokens of a weak mean mind. "Lying lips destroy the soul," and a deceitful tongue is no less destructive. The dear Bishop used to say of all equivocation (the handiwork of the father of lies) what our Lord said of the Scribes and Pharisees, who compassed sea and land to make one proselyte, and then made him tenfold worse than themselves; for those who

[1] Prov. x. 9.

affect to shield truth by artifice do but doubly kill and suffocate it. Nothing is so great an outrage upon simplicity and truth as any kind of dissimulation,—and what is more deceitful than equivocation?

§ XVII. *Duplicity.*

Our dear Father held it to be treason before God and man to hide one's inner self beneath an affected exterior. All who do this he called double-minded, unreal, and dangerous, quoting the words of Holy Scripture, "Woe to him that hath a double heart and a deceitful tongue;" and "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways."[1]

He taught that a well-regulated exterior ought to spring from a still better internal rule; inasmuch as the cause should always be better than the result;—beautiful leaves and abundant fruit, and all the virtue of a tree spring from its healthy roots. As the outer man rises forth from that which is within, so the outer life confirms and strengthens the inner grace; just as the fire has been the cause of those hot ashes which afterward feed it and keep it alive.

Without leaves, the tree would lose its beauty, and afford no shelter to the fruit, and so a well-regulated external life is both a bright indication of that inner life which governs it, and tends to maintain the integrity of the interior man. Mary's part is best, but Martha's external earnestness has its special grace also, and when the two are happily combined in the service of Jesus Christ all is well. Learn the lesson which our dear Father taught, perfectly to combine that which is interior and exterior without any duplicity, so that even as we judge of a man's bodily health by the expression of his countenance, the purity of your inward life may be gathered from the excellence of that which is seen in your outward life.

[1] James i. 8.

§ XVIII. *Prudence and simplicity.*

"I don't know what poor Prudence has done to displease me," the Bishop used to say, "but I can hardly bring myself to like her, and what little favour she finds in my eyes is from mere necessity, because prudence is the salt and the torch of life. But I delight in the beauty of simplicity, and I would give a hundred serpents for one dove! I know that the combination of the two is enjoined upon us in the Gospel, but it seems to me that even as in the medicine Theriaca[1] one must let the serpent proportion be small;—if there are equal parts of serpent and dove, I should not care to trust the compound; meseems the serpent would overpower the dove rather than the other way. An eagle's feather destroys all other feathers; lime consumes that which it touches, and there is an earthly wisdom which God's Holy Spirit calls death, because it leads men by crooked ways to destruction. I am told that in so cunning an age as ours, one must be prudent, for fear of being taken unawares. I will not contend against this maxim, but I think there is another quite as evangelic which teaches us that it is true wisdom in God's Sight to take it all patiently if we are robbed and devoured, knowing that there is something better in store. A good Christian would rather be anvil than hammer, he would sooner be robbed than be a robber, be killed than a murderer, martyred than be himself a tyrant. Let the world storm and rage, let the wisdom of the

[1] S. Francis de Sales alludes here to the old medicine which was supposed to be an antidote to all poisons, especially venomous bites, *Theriaca Andromachi*. A certain Andromachus, physician to the Emperor Nero, invented it, adding to the famous *mithridatium* (of mythological fame) the dried flesh of vipers, whence the name *theriaca*. Both these drugs retained their place in the London Pharmacopœia as late as the year 1771, and it is to be found in that of Paris up to the year 1837. Theriaca contains seventy-two ingredients, so that the allusion to the very small proportion of "serpent" in the compound is very expressive.

age run mad, and the flesh perish—but depend upon it, it is better to be good and simple, rather than sharp and cunning."

§ XIX. *The Bishop's dislike for politics.*

I once expressed my surprise to the Bishop that the Duke of Savoy, Charles Emmanuel, who was a most excellent and very sagacious prince, did not employ him in diplomacy, inasmuch as his wisdom and skill, his patience and gentleness, to say nothing of his well-known repute for holiness, rendered him so eminently successful in whatever negotiations he had ever undertaken. "It must be a very desperate affair which would fail in your hands," I said; "indeed I believe you could accomplish what is impossible!"

"Your rhetoric is slightly extravagant!" Francis answered. "You fancy that other men think of me as you do, you who look at me through certain wondrous magnifying glasses of your own! But enough of this. I think very differently of our prince from you; I think he shows his sense and wisdom in this very matter, for not to say that I am devoid of the dexterity and aptness for diplomacy which you imagine me to possess, I must own that the mere words prudence, business, and politics dismay me, and what I know concerning them is simply nothing."

He added, "Now I will tell you in a confidential whisper that I know nothing whatever of the art of lying and dissimulation and clever feints, which are the mainspring of diplomacy and the most consummate points of worldly wisdom. I wouldn't carry false colours for the whole kingdom of France or Savoy; I live *à l'ancienne Gauloise*, in all simplicity and good faith. What I say is precisely what I think—I cannot speak with a double mind. I hate all duplicity with a mortal

hatred, and I know that God abhors the deceitful man. Most of those who know me are aware that this is the case, and so they very wisely consider me quite incapable of what are called politics. Moreover, I have ever had the greatest reverence for that sublime and most sovereign saying of the Apostle, 'No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life.'"[1]

[1] 2 Tim. ii. 4.

CHAPTER XII.

ON TEMPTATIONS.

§ I. *Temptation in general.*

THE dogs of a household do not bark at the servants thereof, but at strangers: neither does the devil give himself the trouble to set temptation in the way of those who seek it for themselves, and are already marked as his own. When he urges and torments a heart, it is a sign that he is a stranger there, and the more he presses temptation, the stronger we may believe that heart to be, for he never wastes his strength save where there is vigour and power to resist. Francis de Sales used to say that if we knew how to make good use of temptations, we should seek rather than dread them; but as it is, knowing by sad experience and frequent falls how weak and cowardly we are, we may well pray, "Lead us not into temptation." Even so, if to this right mistrust of self we unite trust in God, as stronger to deliver than we to fall, we should hope more and fear less; we should say, "With Thy strength I can leap over a wall."

Great temptations test the strength of our courage and faith, and in them too we make progress in holiness, and learn to wield our spiritual armour against the wiles of our invisible enemies, so that the soul encompassed by the shield of grace is as powerful against them as a host drawn up for battle.

Some persons are ready to despair, and fancy that they are altogether faithless if blasphemous or unholy thoughts assault them. But, in truth, so long as such thoughts are displeasing to those whom

they beset, they do no harm, and often serve only to strengthen their faith. And it is the same with respect to temptations which assault purity, and the like.

§ II. *Counsels concerning temptation.*

We are often troubled and harassed for want of perceiving whether a temptation is from within or without our heart. You will ask how you are to distinguish between the two? The test is this: Examine whether the temptation pleases or displeases you, and be sure that if sins which you hate cannot harm you, still less can temptations do so. Speaking of this, our dear Father said, "Remember that so long as a temptation is displeasing to you, there is nothing to fear, for what makes it displeasing, save that you wish to be free from it?"

"But if I dally with it, either through inadvertence, or indolence, is there not a certain degree of indulged temptation in that?"

"The evil of temptation cannot be measured by the time it lasts; it may trouble us all through life. So long as it is displeasing to us, it cannot cause us to sin; on the contrary, the dislike we feel to such temptation both acts as an antidote and, by exercising our virtue, enhances our crown."

"But I am afraid lest I may have taken pleasure therein?"

"This very fear is a sign that the temptation was unacceptable to you, for one does not fear that which one enjoys, and one dreads only what is an evil; so that if you have looked upon the temptation in the light of an evil, you did not take pleasure therein."

"But nevertheless it is wrong to amuse oneself therewith?"

"If you do so inadvertently, there is no great harm; the gratification must be deliberately sought and willingly consented to, to be sinful."

"How is one to recognise such consent?"

"It is not easily defined, and therefore the prophet exclaims, 'Who can tell how oft he offendeth? O deliver me from my secret faults;' *i.e.* from those sins which he could not discern plainly."

I was once discussing this subject with our dear Father, when he said, "If you doubt whether you have consented to evil, always take the doubt as a negative, and for this reason—Voluntary consent is implied in sin, without the consent of the will there is no sin. Do not too readily imagine that you have consented, and if your heart does not reproach you, be at rest."

§ III. *Trifling temptations.*

When the tempter sees our heart so stablished in grace that we shun sin as it were a serpent, and fly before its very shadow, which is temptation, he sees that he can do little else than disturb and harass us. To this end he raises up a whole troop of trifling temptations, with which he blinds our eyes as in a dust storm, so as to annoy us, and make the paths of holiness disagreeable to tread.

We must meet great temptations with sword and buckler, but these little ordinary ones are never so readily dispersed as by despising them. We defend ourselves against a wolf or a bear, but no one makes warlike preparations against the flies which torment one in summer!

To one who was anxious and disturbed at the flood of temptations against the faith which had assaulted her, our dear Father wrote, "Your temptations have returned, and harass you, although you do not vouchsafe to answer them. Well, my daughter, in so far as not answering them you do right, but you dwell too much upon them; you fear them too much; they would do you no harm but for that. You are too sensitive to temptation: you

love the faith, and cannot bear that any thought inconsistent with it should enter your mind, and directly that such arises, you are disturbed and downcast. In your excessive jealousy for the purity of your faith everything seems to sully it. No, no, my daughter, let the wind blow, and do not mistake the rustling of the trees for the clank of arms! Not long ago I was standing near some beehives, and several bees settled upon me; I was going to brush them off, but a peasant who was by said, 'Leave the bees alone and don't be afraid, and they will not sting, but if you touch them, they will sting directly!' I believed him, and not one hurt me. Now, believe me, treat your temptations in this manner; do not meddle with them, and they will not hurt you. Pass on, and do not dally with them."

Contempt defeats both tempter and temptation better than strife; the mere fact of contest is an acknowledgment that we think a good deal of the enemy and his strength, but disdain shows that we look upon him as defeated already, and unworthy of attention. To despise temptation is a good sign of progress in grace, or of strong confidence in the God of battles, Who fights for those that seek Him fervently. As to the tempter, nothing puts him so effectually to flight as disdain, all the more that thereby his pride is wounded, and he shuns encounter with those who boldly and indifferently stand up against his assaults, while he pursues such as dread him in the spirit of timidity. We have one great advantage on our side, namely, that he has no power to conquer us save such as we ourselves give him, by consenting to his wiles and delusions.

§ IV. *How to rise after a fall.*

The Bishop taught that when one falls, one should rise up at once, quietly, gently, and calmly,

for if one rises with a troubled, vexed mind, we are apt to have a still worse fall. "When we fall through the sudden sallies of self-love or passion," he said, "let us prostrate ourselves as soon as possible before God, saying in a spirit of trustful humility, 'Lord, have mercy upon me, for I am weak.' Let us rise up peacefully and quietly, mend the broken net of love, and go on with our work. There is no need to cast away your lute or break its chords, because it is somewhat out of tune. Listen attentively till you find out which is the faulty string, and then raise or lower it according as the mischief requires."

And to those who argued the point he would say, "It is quite true that we ought to judge ourselves with severity, and exercise a judicial firmness towards our own faults; but just as a judge who gives hasty sentence, or lets himself be swayed by passion, will probably be guilty of injustice, which would not happen if he gave time and sway to reason; so if we would judge ourselves fairly, it must be with a calm, peaceful mind, not when moved with vexation or wrath."

§ V. *Discouragement.*

Francis used to say that the meanest of all temptation is discouragement. If once our enemy can make us despair of progress in holiness, he makes sure of his prey, and will soon cast us over the precipice of vice. With a view to the correction of this error, our dear Father said to one of his children, "Be patient with every one, but above all with yourself. I mean do not be disheartened by your imperfections, but always rise up with fresh courage. I am glad that you make a fresh beginning daily; there is no better means of attaining to the spiritual life than by continually beginning again, and never thinking that we have done enough. How

are we to be patient in bearing with our neighbour's faults, if we are impatient with our own? How can we reprove others in the spirit of meekness if we correct ourselves sharply, bitterly, and spitefully? He who is fretted by his own failings will not correct them; all profitable correction must come from a calm, peaceful mind."

§ VI. *Patience towards oneself.*

Inasmuch as the love which God enjoins us to bear our neighbours is to be modelled upon the equitable Christian love we ought to bear to ourselves, and as charity, which is patient and kindly, requires that we correct our neighbour's faults in a loving spirit, Francis held that it is incumbent upon us to correct ourselves after the like fashion, not treating oneself rudely or peevishly.

"What, is one to flatter oneself!"

"Pray who told you that you were to flatter your neighbour when correcting him? Is not that the 'precious balm' of which the prophet says, 'Let it not break my head'? You must rather imitate the good Samaritan, who poured oil and wine into his patient's wounds; that is, mingle kindly words with the natural bitterness of reproof. To reprove a neighbour with threats and angry words is not to correct, but to irritate him; it is to mingle gall and vinegar with his drink, and if we ought to deal gently with one another, using more oil than vinegar in his rebukes to him, why not with ourselves? for 'no man hateth his own flesh,' and if we are told to do to others as we would be done by, why not do to ourselves as in all fairness we feel bound to do to others?"

"If ever you fall into error," Francis de Sales said, "examine your heart forthwith, and ask whether it is not wholly and earnestly resolved to serve God? I hope it will be able to answer yes—a thousand

times sooner die than renounce this resolution. If so, ask again, 'Then wherefore hast thou fallen? Why so weak?' The answer will be, 'I know not how I was taken by surprise, and fell.' Then the poor weak heart must be forgiven; it fell through infirmity, not lack of faith; it must be gently and calmly corrected, not irritated and disturbed yet more. Rather you should say, 'Be of good cheer, poor heart; in God's Name take fresh courage, go on, be watchful, lift up thyself to God, thy Sole Help!' We must have charity towards our own soul, and not fret it when its falls are not deliberate."

Francis objected even to an excessive spirit of self-accusation, or of exaggeration as to one's faults, not that they are to be treated as unimportant, far from it, but one must guard against calling forth vexation or discouragement instead of humility. What we need is an even mind, humble without losing courage, resolute without ceasing to be humble. "Be just," he wrote, "neither excuse nor accuse your poor soul carelessly, for fear lest through unjustifiable excuses it grow insolent, or by undue accusation you teach it to be timid and cowardly. Go on in all simplicity and confidence."

He never wearied of inculcating patience with oneself. All vexation and irritable annoyance at our own failings is downright impatience; no angry judge can give a fair sentence, and those who wear coloured spectacles see all things subject to their tint. Patience has its perfect work, but impatience is always imperfect, and sometimes one's vexation at some venial fault is more blameable than the fault itself. Have you ever seen a passionate person fly out at some dependant who has, it may be, broken a glass, or some other trifle; and is not such anger the worse mischief of the two? "Be sure," the saintly Francis said, "that patience is the virtue which tends most of any to perfection; and if we

need it with others, we need it no less with ourselves. Those who aim at the pure love of God need patience with themselves even more than with others. He who would attain to perfection must bear with his own imperfection; but mind, I say bear with it patiently, not foster or indulge it. Such forbearance promotes humility."

§ VII. *Speculative minds.*

The Bishop did not approve of endless speculations concerning things of no consequence; he was fond of quoting the Tuscan proverb, "*Favellar in punta di forchetta;*" and likened such speculators to silkworms, who imprison themselves in their own web. Perpetual self-contemplation absorbs time which would be better spent in action; and one is apt to be so absorbed in examining if one is doing a thing well, that meanwhile one does it badly. S. Anthony was once asked how a man can tell whether he prays well. "By the fact of not knowing at all," he replied. "He prays well who is so absorbed in God as not to be conscious that he is praying. A man who examines and counts every step he takes will never achieve a long day's journey." "One who seeks only to please his Loving Master has neither time nor inclination for self-contemplation," Francis said: "his mind continually tends to the point where Love bears him. He does not allow himself to indulge constant retrospection. What satisfies us is far from satisfying the Eye of God, and does but serve to foster our miserable self-love and self-seeking."

But, some will say, ought we not to give diligent heed to all we do, especially in God's service? even as the prophet says, "The whole land is made desolate, because no man layeth it to heart."[1]

Unquestionably it is merely a question of fitness.

[1] Jer. xii. 11.

Not to reflect upon oneself and one's own conduct at all would be to lead a purely animal life. But "there is a time for everything:" there is a time for action, and a time to consider that action. The painter does not pause between each line to examine his work, he makes such contemplation at proper intervals.

Frequent examination of conscience is good—say morning, evening, and mid-day. Every earnest Christian must give good heed to wind up his heart like a clock, and it is well often through the day to watch that all is right within; but he who fixes his attention solely on his own actions will do little to set forward God's Glory; such a habit will become more and more a hindrance, and will end in utter selfishness. Salt and sugar are both excellent things, but too much of either spoils the dish.

§ VIII. "*The just man falleth seven times.*"[1]

A most worthy soul who had meditated upon these words, fell into great perturbation of mind thereupon. "How often then must I fall who am not just! Nevertheless, most careful self-examination did not always cause her to see that she had fallen even seven times in the day. At last, in much perplexity of mind, she consulted the Bishop of Geneva. "It is not said," he answered, "that the just man saw or felt himself fall seven times a day, but that he falls and rises up again without self-consciousness. Do not be troubled, confess the falls you wot of humbly and frankly; but as to those of which you are not conscious, trust them to the tender Mercy of Him Whose Hand guards such as fall unintentionally: Who saves them from bruises, and raises them so lovingly that they scarce realise their fall, or their rising again."

[1] Prov. xxiv. 16.

Some men do not dwell enough upon their own inner life, others reflect upon it overmuch, and perplex themselves by so doing. "You may be sure of this," our dear Father said, "that so long as we are imprisoned in this weary corruptible body, there will be something amiss. Patience; patience with all the world, above all with yourself. No one is so troublesome to one as oneself: as the old Adam to the new Adam; or the visible flesh to the invisible spirit."

§ IX. *Anxiety as to our state of grace.*

There is no temptation, I believe, so keen as that which prompts us to ask whether we are in a state of grace, seeking a greater assurance than that simple moral certainty which God grants us. He who seeks to fathom God's secrets will assuredly fall into a mighty abyss. And to no one is it granted to know certainly whether he merits God's love or hate, that is dogmatically, for as to the certainty of confidence, I grant that as fully as you will. But who would not gladly trust to His Infinite Goodness Who repenteth Him not of His Mercy, and Who ever accomplisheth the good things which He hath begun in us, provided our deliberate sin does not hinder the workings of His Grace and Mercy?

Our dear Father wrote as follows to one who was entangled in fears upon this subject, like a fly in the spider's web:—"Do not investigate whether your heart is pleasing to Him; rather seek whether His heart is pleasing to you, and of a truth, if you gaze upon that Heart, it cannot but be acceptable to you, so tender, so loving, so pitiful towards us miserable creatures is It, if only we will confess our misery. Who so gracious to the weak, so forgiving to the penitent? Who could fail to love this kingly Heart Which is so paternally mother-like to us?"[1]

[1] "Ce cœur royal paternellement maternel envers nous."

§ X. *Hope and fear.*

He who would tread the slippery paths of this life safely must walk between hope and fear ; fear of the fathomless depths of God's Judgments, hope of His boundless, all-encompassing Mercy. "We must fear God's Judgment without losing courage," Francis said, "and hope in His Mercy without presumption." And again, "Those who give way to an uncontrolled fear of perdition are more deficient in humility and submission than in knowledge. We must offer ourselves up in lowliness and self-renunciation, but hoping thereby to find ourselves again upheld and saved. All humility which is in opposition to love is unquestionably spurious. And whatever tends to despair is inconsistent with the love which causes us to 'work out our own salvation,' though with 'fear and trembling ;' a love which above all makes it impossible ever to mistrust God's Goodness, Which would have all men repent and be saved."

§ XI. *The signs of sanctifying grace.*

One of the greatest trials which can come upon a soul which really loves God is when it cannot tell if it loves Him truly, and is in His Grace. Yet save by special revelation, no one can tell whether he deserves God's love or wrath. The Angelic Doctor gives certain tests whereby to judge ourselves.

I. If we have no consciousness of any mortal sin save such as have been cleansed by the sacrament of Penance.

II. If our delight is in God, and in such things as concern and please Him. He doubtless is pleasing to God to whom God is pleasing. "I love those that love Me."

III. If we despise all that is created in com-

parison to the Creator—a mental condition which is called hatred in the Gospel. "If any man hate not his father and mother, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple."

Our saintly Father gave two further tests, which to my mind are still more helpful to such as are troubled on this score. First, try your inner life with the searching light of careful self-examination, and see whether you possess a firm, unalterable resolution never willingly and deliberately to offend God. It is herein that union with His Will chiefly lies, for He desires our grace and sanctification above all things. And secondly, see whether you are animated by a firm, abiding desire to love God: a desire which results in action, not stopping short in mere thought and imagination.

§ XII. *Francis de Sales' own mental trials.*

Of all temptations which assail our faith, that which is involved in the doctrine of predestination is most distressing, and God, Who designed our dearest Father to be a guide of souls, permitted him to learn experience and tenderness for the troubles of other men by personal trial. While yet a student at Paris he was so sorely tried by the idea that he was among the reprobate as to lose sleep and appetite, and his whole physical condition suffered under the struggle. He lost all conscious enjoyment of Divine Love, but meanwhile he never ceased faithfully to resist the assaults of the enemy, even while the remembrance of past spiritual delights did but serve to aggravate his actual desolation. This state of things lasted for a month, until at last, while kneeling before the altar of the Blessed Virgin in fervent prayer, it pleased God to withdraw the shadow, and where darkness had abounded, to let light abound even more than before.

§ XIII. *Sensible devotion.*

Francis mistrusted this, as also those souls which sought it greedily, saying that for the most part they were self-indulgent, and lost more than they gained, just as an over-indulgent mother spoils her child.

"Honour the Lord with thy substance," says the Wise Man.[1] Now assuredly we honour Him with our substance in a time of sterility more than in a season of abundance, and that because when we serve Him without the sweetness of consolation, we seek not mere consolation, but the God of Consolation, Whom we love more heartily because more purely, and more purely inasmuch as self-interest has less share in our love.

Our good works are better in proportion as there is less of self in them: *I*, *me*, and *mine*, are wont to corrupt half that we do; they are like a foul cobweb clinging to a beehive, and spoiling all the honey.

A person once complained to Francis that he had no conscious pleasure in devotion, as though God had deprived him of all its roses, leaving thorns only. "So much the better," was the answer, "then you are clearly not one of those unhappy men who cry out, 'Come crown us with roses!' You belong rather to the company of S. Catherine of Sienna, who chose the crown of thorns rather than a jewelled crown. Which would you rather eat, good meat without sauce, or sauce without meat? a partridge without orange, or an orange without any partridge? How long shall we be like little children who like sweetmeats and cakes better than real satisfying food!"

[1] Prov. iii. 9.

§ XIV. *How to accept spiritual dryness.*

You ask what you should do when God deprives you of consolation and the sweet consciousness of His Presence? Surely this is the time to show whether we follow Jesus Christ for the sake of bread, like the multitude in the desert, or whether we can say with the Apostles, "Let us also go with Him that we may die with Him." How many there are who would fain follow Him to Mount Tabor, but forsake Him when He treads the Mount of Calvary! How many, like swallows, fly from the first chilly blast of adversity, and seek a warmer region! Yet the right thing when God thus takes away the sensible delight and consolation of our devotion is to thank Him for so doing, as a brave soldier thanks his captain for giving him a difficult and dangerous trust, thereby proving confidence in his courage and fidelity. Satan knew what he was about when he said, "Doth Job fear God for naught? hast not Thou made an hedge about him and his house? . . . But put forth Thine Hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse Thee to Thy Face." So then came the overwhelming storm of trial upon holy Job, and he remained stedfast, immoveable as a rock, and the consequence was that "the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning."

Yet you say, "Ought we not rather to thank God for His consolations?" Undoubtedly, as when He takes them away. David says, "My soul shall bless the Lord, His Praise shall ever be in my mouth;" and Job said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord taketh away, blessed be the Name of the Lord."

A child caresses his mother when she gives him sweetmeats, and cries when she takes them from him, because he enjoys their taste, and cannot understand that she only deprives him of the

pleasure when it would hurt him. This is just what we do. How unlike to those great Saints, one of whom exclaimed amid his abundant spiritual consolations, "Leave me, O Lord;" and another, "Enough, O Lord, enough;" or, "Too much, Lord, for mortal man;" or our saintly Father Francis de Sales, "Lord, stay the deluge of Thy favours and consolations, lest they cause me to sink!" Far more are there who re-echo S. Peter's cry, "Lord, it is good for us to be here!"

We should thank God when He withholds such consolations,—

I. Because He is ever to be blessed, and it is our part to adore His holy Will in all things.

II. Because whatever He does is for our good, our very highest good.

III. Because He turns all things to good for those who love Him, and whom He loves.

IV. Because we are followers of the Cross, and we ought to rejoice in sharing the sufferings of our Lord.

V. Because there is a larger field for testifying our fidelity amid desolation and dryness.

VI. Because the sweetness of consolation is apt to foster self-complacency, whence spring pride, the very poison of all good works.

VII. Because we are prone amid consolations to rest rather in them than to seek the God of Consolation—a favourite wile of our great enemy.

"When God deprives us for awhile of conscious delight in His Presence," Francis says, "it is in order that our heart may not cleave to anything short of Himself and His good pleasure. It was even so that He treated Mary Magdalene when He would not let her touch Him, but sent her to tell His brethren that He was risen."

§ XV. *How to accept spiritual dryness.*

Children naturally like sugarplums, and they are not able to understand why such pleasant things should be unwholesome; just so there are weak souls who cannot go on without a constant stream of spiritual consolation. Directly that dryness makes itself felt, they grow languid, faithless, and wearisome to themselves and others; they become at once like the children of Ephraim, who turned their back in the day of battle. "So far from this," Francis de Sales says, "we ought to work all the harder to prove our faithfulness. One act done amid dryness of spirit is worth many performed with delight—the love which prompts it is deeper though less agreeable to oneself."

A brave soldier goes voluntarily into danger, a coward only when he is constrained, and amid the din of trumpets and drums. He who is brave in the things of the spirit, is not cast down by dryness and barrenness, rather he gathers up fresh confidence. Cowards are terrified when they behold the inhabitants of the promised Land, but he who flies from the Cross is not a worthy disciple of our great Master.

§ XVI. *The use of inward trials.*

Just as in our material life there are fewer days of happiness and brightness than of darkness and care, so in the spiritual life dryness and cloud are more common than consolation and heavenly light. This is what caused David to cry out, "O give me the comfort of Thy help again, and stablish me with Thy free Spirit." Yet it is amid such inward anguish that the purest wine of holy love comes forth from the winepress;—then it is that "patience has her perfect work." Some mistakenly imagine

it to be a sign of God's wrath, even although their conscience does not bear witness against them ;—but He has said that He is with us in tribulation, and that whoso does not bear the Cross is not worthy of Him.

The shepherds to whom our Saviour's birth was revealed saw heavenly lights and heard the angelic choir ; but Mary and Joseph were in the darksome manger, and heard naught save the wailing of the new-born Babe. Yet who would not choose to be there with Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, rather than to share the shepherds' joy ?

S. Peter said on the Mount of Transfiguration, "It is good for us to be here," but he knew not what he said. The faithful soul cleaves no less to Jesus on Calvary amid darkness and blood,—the nails and thorns,—and says with full as much meaning, "It is good for us to be HERE."

§ XVII. *Inward consolations.*

There are souls to whom no devotion seems real unless it is sensible,—whose spiritual teeth are so tender, that they can eat no bread from Heaven, unless it be soft ! Our dear Father was most tender for others ;—how often I have seen him weep over those who were in sin or sorrow ! But he was not tender to himself ; and he never complained. In physical suffering, he gave himself quietly up to God's Will and his physician's treatment ; and as to spiritual trials he accepted them willingly, saying that as the best fish comes from out salt water, so the most righteous souls found God's peace amid the pressure of affliction.

To one who was complaining of his lack of delight in pious practices Francis said, "God's love does not consist in consolation or tenderness, else our dear Lord had not loved His Father when His Soul was exceeding sorrowful, or when He cried

out, 'Why hast Thou forsaken Me?' Yet we know that He was then performing the highest act of love we can imagine. We are always craving consolation and sugar with our food."

§ XVIII. *Discontent with one's actual condition.*

Nothing is more common among worldly men, perhaps among some of a better class, than discontent with that condition in which they are actually placed. When the enemy of souls finds that he cannot assail us in full front, he tries a side attack; and if he fails to trip us up, he will at least disturb us as much as possible. Now of all disturbances none is more trying than that which tends to make us dissatisfied with our actual condition.

God's Holy Spirit admonishes us that "every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called,"[1] but the evil one is for ever suggesting that we had better forsake it. Our true welfare lies in holding fast to the ship in which God has placed us, and so making the voyage of this life that we may safely attain to the haven of everlasting life.

"Do not trifle over other things," Francis said; "do not sow a crop of good intentions in another man's garden, but cultivate your own diligently. Do not wish to be anything save what you are, but strive to be that perfectly. Fix all your thoughts on that, and on bearing every cross, great and small, which it involves. Believe me this is the real secret, though so little appreciated, of spiritual direction. Everybody cleaves to his own likings, but few shape their likings to duty and their Lord's Will. What is the good of building castles in Spain,[2] when you must live in France? It is the old story I am always preaching, as you know."

[1] 1 Cor. vii. 20. [2] Anglicè, "castles in the air."

§ XIX. *Joy and sadness.*

Holy Scripture speaks of eternal blessedness as "joy," and the happiness of this life too is joy, but all kinds of joy are not alike. "The hypocrite's hope shall perish," Job says. The joy of the wicked is short-lived, for true joy can only spring from inward peace, and that can come from nothing save a good conscience, which is "as a continual feast." This is that "joy of the Lord" to which the Apostle S. Paul so often alludes.

Francis taught that all happiness in this life depended on that joy; and indeed he so fully possessed it himself that it was said of him by a holy man that he was filled with an unutterable peace. In like manner he could not endure sadness and anxiety, believing with S. Thomas that peace and joy are the greatest signs of love. Thus to one who was yielding to depression he writes :—"Be at peace, and let your soul feed upon the sweetness of heavenly love, without which our hearts were lifeless, our life joyless. Give no place to sadness, the great enemy of devotion. What should sadden one who serves our Everlasting Joy? Nothing save sin ought to vex or grieve us; and even when sorry for sin, holy joy and hope should come to the rescue." When David had poured out all his sorrows, he yet exclaimed, "In God's Word will I rejoice: in the Lord's Word will I comfort me."

§ XX. *Natural fear.*

Fear is a natural emotion—an evil if carried to excess; wholesome if subject to control. Some people are so timid by nature that to speak in public scares them; another dreads thunder and lightning; others are full of ghostly terrors. I have heard of

a brave soldier who feared the silence and darkness of the night!

"I hear that you are afraid of ghosts," Francis wrote to a friend. "But God's Holy Spirit is everywhere, and no other spirit can stir save with His permission. Those who fear that Blessed Spirit need fear none else. You are beneath His Wing; what are you afraid of? When I was young I was rather subject to a like dread, and to cure it I forced myself by degrees to go about alone in the places which my imagination had invested with terror, armed with trust in God, till at last I grew to love the darkness and stillness of night, in which one can enjoy God's Presence yet more fully than by day. The angels are round in a goodly company to guard you. 'He shall give His Angels charge over thee; He shall defend thee under His Wing; thou shalt not be afraid for any terror by night.' Such confidence will strengthen day by day, as God's Grace grows in you, for grace brings forth a confidence and trust which shall never be confounded."

PART III.

On Ecclesiastical Perfection and the Duties of the Ministry.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE EXCELLENCE AND THE OBLIGATIONS OF THE MINISTRY IN GENERAL AND THE EPISCOPATE IN PARTICULAR.

§ I. *Francis de Sales' appointment to the See of Geneva.*

"NO man taketh this honour unto himself but he that is called of God, as was Aaron."[1] And of a truth our saintly Father was called of God: he gave himself to the Church with a single purpose of serving God, and exercised severally the functions of the ministry, till finally his predecessor selected him as Coadjutor. Francis did not indulge in any unrealities on the subject, but left the whole matter in God's Hands. His vocation was so plain that no one could marvel at its fruits. During the ceremony of his consecration God permitted him to be conscious of the working in his soul of the Three Persons of the Ever Blessed Trinity, and of the special grace infused by Them while the three consecrating Bishops did their part. Henceforth Francis always considered himself consecrated to the Holy Trinity.

[1] Heb. v. 4.

§ II. *He refuses the Archbishopric of Paris.*

In the year 1619 Francis came to Paris with the Prince of Savoy, and while there he did a most effectual work for God's Glory. Nor did he only win the confidence of the flock, but that of the shepherds also ; and Cardinal de Retz, after consulting the King, made an attempt to get him for his own coadjutor ; not expecting any difficulty to arise with the Bishop of Geneva himself. He, however, altogether put aside the offer, saying that he could not exchange a needy bride for one that was rich, and that if he left the diocese he had wedded at all, it would rather be with a view to entire freedom than to take another, as S. Paul says, "Art thou loosed from a wife, seek not a wife." But, he added, he had given his whole heart to his diocese, and had no more to give elsewhere.

§ III. *He refuses a pension offered by the King.*

Henri IV. had a very great esteem for the Bishop of Geneva, and was anxious to give him some high position in the French Episcopate. Meanwhile, knowing that his means were straitened, the king offered him a considerable pension. But Francis neither wished to leave his own church nor to give umbrage to his own sovereign by becoming the pensioner of another monarch. Accordingly, he thanked Henri IV. ; gracefully acknowledging the honour done to him, but expressing his belief that the value of a diocese should not be measured by its revenues, but by the capability it might offer of serving God ; and in this respect, he said, his own yielded to none. As to the pension, he would not refuse a gift proffered by so gracious a monarch, but he begged that it might remain in the royal treasury until he needed it for the service of the

Church or his poor, as hitherto God had supplied him abundantly with all necessaries of life. Henri IV. was greatly impressed with the tact of the Bishop's answer, and remarked that it was "the best framed and most graceful refusal he had ever met with;" adding that one so free from all self-seeking must indeed be well-nigh a perfect man.

§ IV. *His wish for retirement.*

If Francis de Sales had lived to return from Lyons, he contemplated retiring from the world, and after having spent so many years in toiling after the fashion of Martha, he hoped to end his days in following Mary's "better part." With this view he had built a hermitage on a very pleasant site by the Lake of Annecy, restoring an old chapel with five or six cells in a cheerful spot of ground. Hard by was a Benedictine monastery, which he had reformed, and where he delighted to resort for friendly intercourse with its inmates. Francis proposed to make over all charge of his diocese to his brother and coadjutor, M. de Chalcédoine, and to retire to this retreat. "Then I shall serve God with my pen and breviary," he said to the Prior: "I shall have leisure to carry out the ideas which I have been meditating these thirty years, for God's Glory and the instruction of souls—ideas which I have stored up from sermons, and private meditations. I have a quantity of notes, and furthermore I hope God will inspire me, and that conceptions will pour down from heaven as freely as the snow-flakes which cover our mountains. Oh! that I had the wings of a dove that I might seek this holy rest, and take breath awhile beneath the shadow of the cross. There I will wait 'until my change come.' *Expectabo donec veniat immutatio mea.*"[1] Alas, God was about to give him a far other rest, even

[1] Job xiv. 14.

that which had ever been the aim of all his labours!

§ V. *The danger of high positions.*

A well-known and eminent prelate was once spoken of in our saintly Father's presence, as aiming vigorously at a Cardinal's hat, to the detriment of his diocese meanwhile.

"I would to God that he were already a Cardinal!" Francis said.

"Wherefore that?" I asked.

"He would then look to something better."

"What!" I exclaimed, "do you suppose he is ambitious enough to aim at being Pope?"

"That is not what I mean; I was thinking of saving souls, which is the art of arts, by practising which we can best serve our Dear Lord."

"But this dignity need not hinder it," I said.

"Certainly not," Francis answered, "as Cardinal Carlo Borromeo has signally proved. But I mean that when Monseigneur N. is not absorbed in seeking this honourable post, he will look within his own heart, and give his undivided attention to those pastoral duties which are of Divine right, thereby greatly edifying the Church." The prelate in question attained the coveted dignity at last, just when he least expected it, and from that time he ceased to prize what he before so earnestly desired, preferring the pastoral office which once he despised. He was about to retire and devote himself to its duties, when God called him hence, after six months' joyless possession of the dignity he had sought during thirty years.

§ VI. *Francis' views as to ecclesiastical dignity.*

Clement VIII. and Paul IV. had both a great regard for the Bishop of Geneva, and the latter

wished to give him a Cardinal's hat, as Francis well knew. One day I was talking to him about it, when he said, "After all, how do you think that it would enable me to serve our Lord and His Church better? Would Rome be a more advantageous post for that than the place where God has placed me? Should I find more work, more foes to overcome, more souls to guide, more cares, more devotion, more pastoral duties?"

"You would take part in the care of all the churches," I replied, "and you would leave the guidance of an individual church to take part in that of the Universal Church, jointly with the Pope and the Sacred College."

"But you see daily how the most eminently learned and holy Cardinals leave Rome, where their residence is merely a matter of ecclesiastical duty, for their pastoral charge, which is a question of Divine right, inasmuch as they are bound to watch over their flocks, and to feed and tend the souls committed to them."

Francis went on to tell me an anecdote of his venerated friend, Cardinal Bellarmino, who was raised to the Cardinalate without being consulted, and against his will, by Pope Clement VIII. Later on he was appointed Archbishop of Capua, equally without seeking it. Directly after his consecration the new Archbishop made ready to go to his diocese, but the then Pope, Paul V., counted upon his valuable services in the Sacred College, and, sending for him, inquired if he was really resolved on going to Capua.

Bellarmino replied that he was; he had accepted the burden in obedience to His Holiness's commands, and it was but right that he should bear it. The Pope offered him a dispensation from his episcopal duties. "Holy Father," he replied, "that is not what I have been teaching all my life in the schools; I have ever held that the residence of

Bishops is a matter of Divine right, and therefore is indispensable."

"But at least, give us half the year," Paul pleaded.

"And meanwhile, at whose hands will the souls of my flock be required?"

"Three months, then," the Pope urged.

But the Cardinal replied: "No sooner than six." And he went to Capua, and remained there three years without moving, writing his great Commentary as a recreation amid his pastoral toils; nor could the Pope induce him to return to Rome, save by consenting to his resignation and the appointment of another head to the See of Capua.

S. Carlo Borromeo and his worthy successor, Federigo, held the like views, and, together with our dear Father, esteemed all dignity, whether ecclesiastical or secular, as worthless, save in so far as they afforded more or less opportunity for serving God and promoting His Glory.

§ VII. *Obedience as practised by superiors.*

"Mon Père," I said one day, "how is it possible for those who are themselves high in office to practise the virtue of obedience?"

Francis answered, "They have greater and more excellent ways of doing so than their inferiors."

As I did not understand this reply, he went on to say, "Those who are bound by obedience are usually subject to one superior only, whom they are obliged to obey in preference to all others; and indeed, they require his consent before they can obey any one else. But those who are themselves superiors have a wider field for obedience, even while they command; for if they bear in mind that it is God Who has placed them over other men, and gives them the rule they bear, they will exercise it out of obedience to God, and thus, even while commanding, they will obey. Even monarchs,

who are subject to God only, can practise this obedience; and moreover, there is no position so high but that it is subject to a spiritual superior in what concerns the conscience and the soul. But there is a yet higher point of obedience to which all superiors may aspire, even that to which S. Paul alludes when he says, 'Though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.'[1] It is by such universal obedience to every one that we become 'all things to all men;' and, serving every one for our Lord's sake, we esteem all to be our superiors."

In accordance with this rule, I have often observed how Francis de Sales treated every one, even the most insignificant persons who approached him, as though he were himself the inferior, never repulsing any one, never refusing to enter into conversation, to speak, or to listen; never betraying the slightest sign of weariness, impatience or annoyance, however importunate or ill-timed the interruption. His constant reply was, "It is God's Will; it is what He requires of me; what more need I ask? While I am doing this I am not required to do anything else! God's Holy Will is the centre whence all we do must radiate; all else is mere weariness and excitement."

§ VIII. *"Did the Apostles go about in carriages?"*

When the Bishop was in Paris, in the year 1619, a Protestant sought him out; and, coming into his room without any salutation, abruptly asked, "Are you the man they call Bishop of Geneva?"

"Yes, sir; that is what I am called," Francis answered.

"Then I should be glad if you, who pass everywhere for an Apostolic man, would tell me whether the Apostles drove about in carriages?"

[1] 1 Cor. ix. 19.

The Bishop was somewhat taken by surprise ; but, without betraying it, he remembered how S. Philip went in the eunuch's carriage, and he replied that "he thought they did, when there was any object gained by doing so."

His assailant shook his head, and said he should like to know where he found that in the Bible ! whereupon Francis referred him to the Acts of the Apostles. The man did not expect this, but recovering himself, he said, "Anyhow, that was not Philip's own carriage."

"I did not say that it was. I only said that the Apostles made use of carriages when it was convenient to do so."

"But not of magnificent gilt, embroidered carriages, as fine as the King's, with splendid horses and grand coachmen. There is nothing about that ; and yet that is what you do, who make-believe to be a saint. A pretty sort of saint, forsooth ! and a mighty easy way of driving to Paradise !"

"Alas, my dear sir," Francis said, "the worthy inhabitants of Geneva have mowed my grass so short that it is all I can do to live humbly enough upon the little they have left. I never had a carriage of my own, nor the means of having one."

"Then is not the pompous, princely carriage in which I see you constantly your own ?"

"No," the Bishop replied, "it is not. You are quite right to call it princely, for it belongs to his Majesty, and he puts it and others at the disposal of those who, like myself, are in attendance upon the Prince of Savoy. You might have seen that by the royal liveries."

"Well, I am glad of that ; I like you all the better. You are really poor, it would seem."

"I do not complain of my poverty, for I have wherewith to live decently, though without superfluities ; and even if I were pressed by it, it would be wrong to complain of that which Jesus Christ

chose as His earthly lot, living and dying in poverty.".

The visitor was altogether disarmed, and left Francis with many assurances of respect, notwithstanding the Bishop's appearance in a royal carriage!

§ IX. *The Bishop's indifference to worldly goods.*

Although the Genevese withheld almost all the revenues both of See and Chapter, I never heard the Bishop make a complaint, so little heed did he give to the things of this world. He was wont to say that the Church's property resembled a beard in one way, the more it was shaved the thicker it grew. When the Apostles had nothing, they possessed all things; and if Churchmen seek to possess overmuch, it becomes naught. All his longings were for the conversion of those whose eyes were closed to the light. Often he would say, when talking of Geneva, "Give me their souls, and you are welcome to all the rest!"

He never joined in the Psalm *Super flumina*,[1] "By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept," without applying it to Geneva, where once its predecessors dwelt; not that he longed after their wealth and position, for truly he "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt," but he sighed after the souls that were being lost there. His chaplain has told me that, when saying this psalm privately with him in their office, the tears would flow from the Bishop's eyes.

He used to say that Henry VIII. of England, who had begun his reign with such zeal for the Church, and then fell into lust and sin, craved once more at the close of his life to be restored to the Church, but that his political entanglements would not allow it: he had given Church lands away in

[1] Ps. cxxxvii.

every direction, and could not recall them. "A mere handful of dust!" Francis would exclaim. "The portion of the true Christian is to keep the Law of the Lord. The Lord is the portion of his cup and his heritage."

§ X. *Characteristics of true zeal.*

Francis was always suspicious of zeal, lest it be false, saying that as wise householders complain that peacocks do more harm than good about the house, for though they eat up spiders and other insects, they quarrel with other poultry and scare them away, even so zeal is apt to be impetuous; and, although its efforts to uproot vice are good, they often have evil results, for want of prudence and moderation.

There is a harsh, sharp zeal which overlooks nothing, which exaggerates the slightest offences, and is like a bad doctor, who does but aggravate the sickness he should cure. There is another kind of zeal so indulgent that it passes over everything, intending to practise that charity which is long-suffering and forbearing indeed, but which never overlooks an injury done to God or His Glory; but both are making a mistake. True zeal, combined with knowledge and judgment, obeys the precept, "Inter utrumque vola, medio tutissimus ibis."

It overlooks certain things, or, at all events, it leaves them to be corrected at a fitting time, while others it rebukes without delay, when there is good hope of amendment; and it leaves nothing undone which can promote and increase the Glory of God.

A gentle, winning zeal is tenfold more efficacious than such as is noisy or stern. Thus, when Isaiah speaks of the Messiah as coming to subject the whole universe to His light yoke, he calls Him, not

the Lion of the tribe of Judah, but the Lamb brought to the slaughter.

§ XI. *Francis' zeal for souls.*

During a visitation tour in the snow mountains of Facigny the Bishop was much touched by the death of a poor shepherd who, in trying to save one of his cows, fell over a precipice, and was found dead and frozen. He applied the lesson to his own flock, and the duty of not sparing his very life for their sakes. "During the last few days," he says, "I have seen the mighty mountains covered with ice and snow, and the inhabitants of the neighbouring valley told me that one of their shepherds, while seeking a stray heifer, had fallen into a fissure, and was killed. O my God, said I to myself, this poor shepherd sought his missing heifer with an ardour which the ice could not chill while he lived; wherefore then am I so cold in seeking my sheep? My heart was deeply moved, and melted within me. I saw other things too which read me a lesson; the valleys are full of dwelling-places, while the high mountains are barren and icebound. Even so I said to myself, poor widows and village folk are full of goodness and piety, while we Bishops, who are placed upon the Church's heights, are cold and hard. Is there no sunshine able to melt the chilliness of my heart?"

§ XII. *The episcopal spirit.*

As successors of the Apostles, Bishops ought not to limit their solicitude so exclusively to their own dioceses as to forget the general welfare of all the churches. Francis, in addition to the minute care he gave to his own sheepfold, extended his solicitude to the Universal Church, and God gave him great light and special gifts of counsel and understanding

which would doubtless have been most valuable had he been made a Cardinal. Cardinal Bellarmino (whom I knew personally) never received a letter from Francis without the greatest satisfaction. I remember seeing an answer to one of these, in which the Cardinal said, "I never receive a letter from you, Monseigneur, without being tempted to wish myself the Pope, that I might at once add you to the Sacred College. It seems to me that we greatly need such as you are, for I perceive that God communicates to you light concerning the Universal Church, which ought to enlighten his Holiness and the Cardinals. I pray you impart to me what you can from time to time thereof, that I may suggest what is good to his Holiness."

Not long before he died Francis told me that he felt inwardly moved to visit Rome, in order to suggest various things which thirty-five years spent in seeking souls had taught him to consider of the greatest importance for the welfare of the Universal Church.

§ XIII. *He tranquillises M. de Belley's fears.*

Henri IV. nominated me to the See of Belley in 1608, and on August 30th, 1609, I was consecrated in the Cathedral Church by our dear Father, a dispensation as to age having been granted me, because the see had been left for four years without any Bishop. Later on I was troubled with scruples as to this premature consecration ; and laying them before my revered director, he comforted me on the score of the needy diocese, the opinion of many competent judges, the King's wish, and the Holy Father's dispensation, bidding me not look behind me, but, according to S. Paul's precept, "reach forth unto the things which are before." "You came into the vineyard in the first hour of the day," he said ; "beware lest you work indolently, and

let those who come in at the eleventh surpass you in diligence."

One day I said, "Well, *mon père*, however good and holy you may be thought, at all events you were guilty of consecrating me too soon!"

"Yes indeed," he answered, "I did commit that error, and I fear it is not forgiven, as hitherto I have not repented me of it! But seriously I implore you by our common Master, live so as never to give me any cause to regret it. I have assisted at the consecration of other Bishops, but you are the only one I ever consecrated myself—you are both my apprentice work and my *chef d'œuvre*. Let us be of good cheer; God will help us. He is our Strength and our Salvation; of whom shall we be afraid? He is the Saviour of our life; what need we fear?"

§ XIV. *The episcopal charge.*

I had been complaining of the trials and contradictions which I encountered in my pastoral charge, and my beloved Father answered that he who would serve the Lord must prepare for temptation, inasmuch as none can follow Jesus Christ, or be of the number of His disciples, or reach Heaven save by the path of suffering. "Remember," he said, "that even before the Fall Adam was set to till the earthly paradise; do you suppose that when sin drove him forth, it was that he might be idle? Remember how God condemned him and all his posterity to the toil of cultivating an ungrateful soil; and surely it is harder work to cultivate souls than the roughest, most stony land.

"The highest work of all is the direction of souls. You must not meddle with it unless you are prepared for a thousand troubles and trials. The Son of God was Himself the object of ceaseless opposition. Can we wonder if His followers meet with it too? How He laboured and suffered to win souls! Is

it likely that His followers should be better off than their Master?

"S. Paul, writing to the young Bishop Timothy, says, 'Be instant; in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.' Observe, he puts longsuffering before doctrine, and that because naught save patience answers with those that are hard to win. Patience enables us to possess, not our own souls only, but those of others also; and therein the patient man surpasses the brave and energetic. The Apostle also teaches all Bishops to be watchful and diligent, temperate in all things, setting himself before Timothy as an example of toil and endurance in poverty, in cold and nakedness, in hunger and thirst." And then lest I should quail before the difficulties of my position, he reminded me how the Prince of all Pastors had chosen the Cross and its shame in preference to peace and pleasantness, for the sake of our salvation, and how the Apostles and Fathers trod in His steps. "You must accept the burden with the inheritance," he said. "Where there is love, there no toil seems great, or it becomes light for love's sake. Jacob was ready to bear all things for love of Rachel. When a woman is in travail, she crieth out in her pangs, but as soon as the child is born she remembereth them no more. And the passing troubles of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory which awaits us in Heaven, where God will wipe away all tears, and there shall be no more crying or sorrow, for the former things are passed away."

§ XV. *The difficulties of the pastoral office.*

The Council of Trent says that the responsibility of a Bishop's office would be heavy to the very angels themselves; and S. Gregory speaks of the government of souls as "the art of arts."

A certain pastor once complained to our dear Father of the thorny path he had to tread, and the cares inseparable from his vocation ; especially the hardness and indocility of his people. Francis replied that it would be well rather to consider the faintheartedness of those pastors who are cast down and grow impatient when their efforts and remonstrances lead to no immediate results. We do not blame a husbandman because the harvest is scanty, but we do blame him if he has not duly tilled the field so that it might bring forth fruit. He who is easily discouraged proves himself to have a great deal of self-love, and less wisdom than zeal. There is no better lesson for pastors than that which S. Paul sets before us all in the person of S. Timothy : "Be instant ; in season, out of season ; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and doctrine," wherein that word longsuffering or patience is the keynote to all. It is by means of patience that we possess our souls in peace. He went on to quote S. Bernard's words : "*Onus animarum, non validarum est, sed infirmarum*," which he illustrated by saying that birds carry a certain weight of feathers, but without that burden they could not rise up into the air ; and the care of good and holy souls is as a burden of sweet spices, the gracious scent of which revives those who bear it. Such souls help the pastors who lead them to press forward in the path of God's Commandments, and to attain Heaven. Again, look at a shepherd in charge of a hundred sheep ; if one sheep breaks its leg, he lays it on his shoulder and carries it to the sheepfold, and that one sheep is a greater burden to him than all the others who can walk alone ; even so godly souls try the care and patience of their spiritual guides but little, the real toil is to be found among those who are full of frailty and difficult to manage.

§ XVI. *Temptations to discouragement.*

"Beware," Francis said to me, "of the temptation which inclines you to throw up your charge, and leave your diocese for a retired life. Your bride is holy" (referring to the Church, whose ring of betrothal he had given me), "and better able to sanctify you than the 'believing wife' of whom S. Paul speaks. No doubt you are troubled concerning the numerous spiritual children she brings you, but amid this anxiety and care you will find peace—that peace of God which passeth all understanding. If you forsook your charge in order to seek repose, perhaps God would visit you with trouble and harass therein, and you would be like that good Brother Leontius, who had enjoyed abundant heavenly delights while actively employed in his monastery, but when he persistently sought leave to confine himself to his cell, hoping to lead a more contemplative life, all that spiritual sweetness departed from him.

"Remember" (oh how deeply these words sank into my heart!) "that God does not look graciously on their peace whom He destines for war. He is the God of battles as well as the God of peace."

Although I was only twenty-five years old, he insisted on my applying myself to all my episcopal duties. He urged my celebrating Mass daily, and made me visit, preach, administer the Sacraments, and do whatever was involved in my office, without exception. One day, when I was worn out and weary, and was bemoaning myself to him, Francis bade me remember the words of our Dear Lord: "A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come; but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more her anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world."

"What an honour it is for you," he went on to say,

"that God should vouchsafe to use you in loosing souls from the bands of sin and death, and bringing them to the life of grace! You must be like earthly husbandmen, who are never better pleased than when they are overwhelmed with the weight of their harvest. Who ever heard a reaper or grape-gatherer complain of the abundance thereof? I see very well that you want a little petting and comforting over your welcome toils. Be it so. I really think that as we call those who confess God before men by the name of martyrs, so we may very fairly also call those martyrs who confess men before God—nay, we will call all such both martyrs and confessors."

"Indeed," I said, "I think one is more than a martyr when one has to confess scrupulous people!" "Truly you are not far wrong!" Francis replied. "It is something like going up to a beehive, having one's face smeared with honey."

§ XVII. *God bears His servant's burden.*

One day I was complaining of the burden of the episcopal office, declaring that if I had known what it was, I never would have undertaken it. "It seems to me, forsooth," Francis said, "that you have but little cause to murmur, you who have such a small field to till, and that so free from the noxious weeds of heresy. What would you do if you had such a diocese as mine, the very hotbed of error and the refuge of heresy and schism?"

"I don't believe," I answered, "that there is a better ordered diocese in all France than yours, or one containing more good pastors and worthy ecclesiastics!"

"God is very good," he replied. "He sends such wind as is needed to fill our sails, and teaches us to turn our troubles to account: 'Except the Lord had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma.' Never-

theless, I sit down and weep by the great waters which issue forth out of my Babylon, while I try to comfort myself with the blessed hope that the Father of Light will one day lighten its darkness, and cause His Brightness to shine upon my poor people who are yet within the shadow of death. What an outcry you would make, if you had such a burden thrown upon your hands."

"Why do you trouble yourself so much with those that have voluntarily forsaken their Mother the Church?" I asked. "You have another flock so docile that they may well be your crown and joy in the Lord."

"I will take you by the words of your own mouth, my dear son," Francis answered. "Why do you not look at your own flock from the same point of view as you do at mine? I think that yours are just as docile. You want a more equal mind, which will not undervalue what God does for you, and fancy that He does more for others. It is a sure sign of a petty mind always to think your neighbour's crops more abundant, and his stock better fed than your own. Thank God for the one, and don't be ungrateful for the other."

"All the same, it is a heavy charge, whether for you or me," I resumed.

"Certainly, if we bear it alone," the Bishop replied, "but our Lord bears part of the yoke with us; indeed He may be said to bear it all, inasmuch as He upholds both us and our yoke."

"Do you call it a trifle to have to give account for so many souls?" I asked. And he answered, "We have to do with a Master Who is rich in Mercy towards all those who call upon Him; He remits our ten thousand talents forthwith if we do but ask it. You must do justice to His Goodness; serve Him with fear, but while you tremble, do not forget to rejoice. Fainthearted humility is not the genuine article."

§ XVIII. *Bishop Camus's wish to resign.*

I consulted Francis de Sales about my wish to resign my Bishopric and lead a retired life. He answered me in the words of S. Augustine, "*Otium sanctum diligit caritas veritatis, et negotium justum suscipit veritas caritatis.*" That is to say, charity, or love of eternal truth, seeks holy rest wherein to stay her longings; but true love leads us readily to undertake whatever may best promote our neighbour's welfare and God's Glory. While Francis believed Mary's part to be indeed "the better," as our Saviour called it, he nevertheless thought that that of Martha, if undertaken for God's Sake, befitted this life best; excepting always in the case of certain vocations which cannot be questioned; as also of certain persons who have no capacity for Martha's work, while they are well fitted for the contemplative life. He also excepted those who, after expending all their bodily strength in the service of souls, seek an interval at the end of life, the better to prepare for death. But he looked upon my wish to retire solely as a temptation, and dealt with it so peremptorily that I never dared return to it during his lifetime.

§ XIX. *Francis' answer to a Bishop who wished to abandon his charge.*

A certain Bishop consulted Francis de Sales as to his intention of retiring into private life, citing S. Gregory Nazianzen, who resigned Sasima, Nazianzum, and finally Constantinople, and retired to his farm. "We may take it for granted," he answered, "that such eminent saints did nothing without being specially moved thereto by God's Holy Spirit, neither can we judge of their actions

from without ; S. Gregory resigned the See of Constantinople in order to maintain peace."[1]

The Bishop alluded to the terrible responsibility of so many souls. "Alas!" Francis replied, "what would you say to the burden I bear, and yet I too must trust wholly to God's Mercy?"

The stranger went on to say that he was like a torch wasting itself in giving light to others, and that he had so much to do for his people that he had no time to think of his own soul.

"But the salvation of your people so nearly concerns your own," Francis replied, "that surely you are working for that while toiling for them. How can you save your own soul otherwise than by labouring for their souls, seeing that is the work to which God has called you?"

The Bishop said he feared lest he might be lost himself while striving to lead others to God. "Read the Lives of the Saints," Francis answered, "and throughout those and in all Church history you will find a larger proportion of Bishops than of any other order or calling among the saints ; and that because no other condition supplies such abundant means of sanctification. The best way to advance towards perfection is by leading others thereto in word and example, and all Bishops are bound to do this. The whole life of a Christian on earth is one continual race for the prize of perfection, and no calling in the Church tends so much that way as that of a Bishop, both as to means and end. Therefore it seems to me that to quit this vocation is in a measure to look back. Abide in the ship where God wills you to make the voyage of life ; the passage is but short ; it is not worth while changing. If your head swims in a great ship, it will be still worse in a little tempest-tossed bark ; for although a quieter position may seem more restful, depend

[1] Sozomen, Book vii. 7.

upon it there will be no less of trial and temptation even there."

The Bishop in question yielded to Francis de Sales' advice, and remained in the post to which God had called him.

§ XX. *S. Federigo Borromeo.*

The Archbishop of Lyons (Mgr. de Marquemont) and the Bishop of Geneva having business to transact, met by appointment at my house—Belley being nearly half-way between Lyons and Annecy. I had the happiness of receiving them for a week or ten days, during which they edified all men by their example, their sermons, and their daily celebrations. My only drawback was their complaint that I entertained them too liberally, though in truth it was little or no expense to me, as every one, clergy, nobility, and people, vied with one another to contribute somewhat for the entertainment of the illustrious prelates. "When you go," I said, "they will give me nothing, and there will be an end to all my good cheer; it is all for your sake!" One day after dinner they intreated me to retrench what seemed to them superfluous, and bade me treat them as S. Carlo treated the Bishops who were wont to visit him at Milan.

"I do not know how that may have been," I answered, "for S. Carlo departed from this world on the very day I entered it, but I know very well how his nephew and successor, Cardinal Federigo Borromeo, receives his guests, because I have often stayed with him."

So we fell talking about the matter, and I told them how Cardinal Borromeo has a revenue of 50,000 crowns, with which he does so much for God's service and that of the poor that he might be a very Crœsus. The foundation of the Ambrosian Library is a specimen. But in all that concerns

his person and household his frugality is amazing. You will find nothing in the way of dress or furniture save what is absolutely necessary. He lamented once to me that the rule set forth by the Council of Trent is so little observed among Bishops, and that you do not find the *frugalem mensam* and *pauperem supellectilem*. He sighed over the poor who stand shivering at episcopal gates, while the walls are clothed with rich hangings; over the heavily laden tables, whence not even the overflow is given to the poor.

My guests pressed for details, so I described a certain visit which the Bishop of Ventimiglia and I paid to the Cardinal after the Pontifical Mass on the feast of San Carlo, 1616. We dined with him, and so did Count Carlo Borromeo. All through the house we saw neither tapestry nor silk, and the walls, though clean, were perfectly bare, save for a few religious pictures. Plates, dishes, saltcellars, everything was of ordinary white earthenware; there was no silver save the spoons; forks and knives were both of brightly polished steel. Grace having been said (after the Roman breviary), we took our places. One of the chaplains read a chapter from the Gospel during the first half of the meal without any interruption. We remained listening for some time before any food was served. The first course was brought in equal portions for each guest as in religious houses. We each had two dishes; first five or six spoonfuls of what in Italy they call vermicelli, which is something like rice coloured with saffron; and then a small boiled chicken, floating in a little broth. I say "small" advisedly, for it was less than the ordinary size. This was our first course. The second, which was by way of being the great banquet, also consisted of two dishes; first three balls of mincemeat and herbs, about as big as a poached egg, and then a *grive* served up with an orange. After that we

each had two dishes for dessert ; an uncooked pear, ready peeled and very tiny, while the other dish I took to be a napkin to wipe one's hands, until I saw Mgr. de Ventimiglia ferreting about in his, whence he extracted a scrap of Milanese cheese as big as a penny, so I supposed I should find the same in mine ; nor was I mistaken, and the napkin was then turned to its natural use, some rose or orange-flower water being brought to us. This is a full description of our great festival, which certainly did not include any superfluities, or make us heavy or unfit for work afterwards! So I asked my guests if they wished me to feed them à la Borroméenne? To which they replied that undoubtedly our mountain digestions do not quite like such very light repasts, but that neither did they wish to be so choked with good things as heretofore !

Mgr. de Marquemont told a story of a French Cardinal at Rome, who having to receive Cardinal Bellarmino, and knowing him to be a very holy man, determined rather to treat him after S. Carlo's fashion than *à la mode Française.* So the repast was marvellously frugal, and at the end the host, meaning to be highly complimentary, told his guest that knowing his ascetic habits he had thought to please him by so homely and plain a reception. Cardinal Bellarmino was always full of fun, and having been somewhat starved, he only answered, "Assai, Monsignore illustrissimo, assai ;" an idiom which in Italian implies, "rather too much of that!" But the Frenchman, who understood more French than Italian, thought it meant that the Cardinal was delighted, and promised if he ever had a repetition of the honour, to outdo the simplicity of this banquet !

Francis in his turn told the story of a French Ambassador, newly arrived in Rome, who did not know the custom of stopping one's carriage when

a Cardinal passes, who in return stops his out of compliment to the Ambassador or other great person so greeting him. It chanced that this Ambassador met a Neapolitan Cardinal out driving, and some gentlemen called out to the coachman, "Ferma, ferma!" which means "Stop, stop!" But he was a Frenchman, and thought they meant go on faster. So he whipped on his horses as fast as he could, and the more the gentlemen shouted the faster he drove, till the Cardinal seeing such a commotion thought it was an intentional insult, and was greatly affronted. It was necessary to make explanations and apologies, and when the Italian was assured that the Frenchman thought "Ferma" meant "go steadily," he could only say, "I Francesi hanno ogni cosa in rovescia, la lingua come il cervello!"

§ XXI. *Men must not shrink from the duties of their ministry.*

Early in my episcopate I told my dear friend that I had many struggles between two virtues which conflicted within me: charity and chastity. Charity in its strength and vigour, fearing nothing, urging me on to do great things for God's Glory; ready to brave death, hunger, and thirst, nakedness, persecution, and the sword; fearless of past, present, or future, stronger than death or hell, yet patient, meek, hoping all things, bearing all things, indifferent as to pleasing men, if it may but please God; bold, enterprising, determined. Then, on the other hand, chastity is timid and sensitive; trembling at every shadow, quick to every sound, fearing every peril. It takes alarm at a glance—as a very Job, who had made a covenant with his eyes; the slightest word disconcerts it; it is suspicious of sweet scents; good food seems a snare, mirth a levity, society treacherous, light reading a danger. It moves along

all eyes and ears, like one covered with jewels who crosses a forest and starts at every step, fancying he hears robbers. Charity is ready to succour its neighbour whether sick or well, rich or poor, old or young; regardless of age, sex, or condition; it sees God Alone in all things, and all things in God. But on the other hand, chastity knows itself to possess a priceless treasure in a frail vessel which is liable to be broken by sundry temptations. How are the two things to be reconciled?

The Bishop's answer was this, "You must distinguish," he said, "between those persons whose position obliges them to take charge of others, and such as lead a private life which involves no responsibility save for themselves. The first must commit chastity to the keeping of charity, and if it be real, it will answer to the trust, and serve as a wall and rampart; but private persons do well to subject their charity to chastity, and maintain great reserve and caution in their doings. Those in responsible positions are often obliged to expose themselves to temptation inseparable from their duties, and so long as they do not tempt God by presumption, His Grace will guard them; but there is presumption in exposing oneself to risk without being called thereto by duty, and those that trifle with danger may well fear to fall."

§ XXII. *Francis' old tutor the Abbé Déage.*

The excellent man who had watched over Francis during all his studies in Savoy, Paris, and Padua, remained with him all his life, and had great influence with him. Francis treated him with the utmost respect, calling him his father and master. He made him a Canon of Geneva, and put his own house and table at the Abbé's disposition, besides providing liberally for him. The venerable Abbé

for his part was so zealous for his pupil's honour, that he could not hear a word said against him of any kind without losing his temper. Sometimes the Bishop would try to convince him that it was unreasonable to be so sensitive.

"Do you think that I am perfect, or a saint?" he would ask.

"I want you to be," was the reply.

"But even if I were," the former pupil would say, "the saints themselves were often censured and mocked. Were they exempt from persecution and the contradiction of evil tongues? Was not our Dear Lord slandered? Did not S. Paul rebuke S. Peter, and was he not himself supposed to be mad by reason of his much learning?"

But there was no convincing the good old gentleman, who himself was perpetually rebuking the Bishop for his most trifling faults (or what the former took to be faults) with a freedom which would have exhausted the patience of any one else, and which could only be excused by the intense affection of the master and the unfailing meekness of the disciple.

When Francis first became a Bishop (he was about thirty-six years old) every one alike had free access to him, for he held that as God had put his light on a candlestick, he was bound to impart it to all men; but the old Abbé declared such a course was most unsuitable to episcopal dignity; and especially he could not bear the Bishop to receive and grant such lengthy interviews as he did to women. One day he was urging Francis on this score, intreating him to reserve his time for worthier occupations, and to avoid the occasions for scandal which might arise from such interviews, when at last Francis exclaimed, "My dear Abbé, what would you have! A charge of souls does not mean helping the strong but the weak, and one must either not meddle with such work at all, or give

oneself wholly to it. God abhors lukewarmness, and requires an unlimited service. The serpent's wisdom is all very well, but I greatly prefer the innocence of the dove. God, Who is charity itself, has called me to this charitable work, and He enables me to think of nothing in it save His Love; so long as I hold fast to Him, He will not forsake me; He never fails those who seek Him with their whole heart. If we are brave in His service, He will not let us fall or be hurt. He is a sure strength; none who hold His Hand can perish. He can lift us up from the deep; how much more can He save us from falling into it! I am not afraid of any difficulties with His Aid."

§ XXIII. *Precautions as to women's visits.*

A certain prelate was so determined to admit no women of whatever class within his doors that he built a sort of *parloir* with a grating in the chapel, where he saw them. Our dear Father was much attached to this Bishop, and without condemning his strictness, he laughed pleasantly at it, saying that he was only half a shepherd who thus severed himself from one half of his flock! In consequence of the dissatisfaction this conduct excited, Francis undertook to remonstrate with his friend.

The Bishop replied that he was quite young; he feared idle gossip about himself; he thought he might be led away in conversation, and cited the opinion of sundry Fathers and respectable ecclesiastics on the subject.

Francis praised his caution and desire to do right, but suggested that there was a better and less remarkable, though not less sure way of accomplishing his end. "Do not see women alone," he said. "Give orders to some of your household to remain in sight, when you receive them—not within earshot

however, when you confer upon matters of conscience. Ask whichever of your chaplains is your conscience keeper to give you friendly warnings, if you fail in word or act, and believe me you will guard yourself more effectually than by any iron bars, be they ever so bristling."

As to letters he advised the same prelate not to write to women save when answering letters; always except in case of necessity, or to such persons as by their position or age were above suspicion. He used sometimes to say that one should write to women with a knife rather than a pen, so as to avoid all superfluous words.

§ XXIV. *Francis sought by women.*

Some one once said rather rudely to Francis that he was "for ever surrounded by women."

"Not meaning any presumptuous comparison," he answered, "it was the same with our Dear Lord, and the Pharisees murmured at it."

His friend strove to turn the matter by saying, "Well, I am sure I don't know what makes them flock around you so much, for it seems to me that you never say much to them."

"Do you call it nothing to let them talk as much as they will to me?" Francis asked. "Most assuredly, they care more for ears to listen than words to reply. They talk enough for us both, and probably they come to me because I am such a good listener; nothing is so delightful to great talkers as a patient hearer."

His friend would not let the matter drop, but went on to say that he always observed the Bishop's confessional surrounded by infinitely more women than men.

"*Que voulez-vous?*" he answered; "women are more devout than men. I wish the latter were as much disposed to penitence."

Growing still bolder, the other asked if there are more women saved than men?

"Joking apart," the Bishop answered, "we may not presume to pry into God's secret mysteries, or to institute ourselves His counsellors." And therewith he put an end to the discussion.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS.

§ I. *Daily celebration.*

A CERTAIN young priest for whom Francis de Sales had a great affection, and who was in charge of a parish, was satisfied with saying Mass on Sundays and festivals. Wishing to lead him to daily celebration, the Bishop set to work by making him a present of a case in red satin, embroidered with gold and silver and pearls, and when putting it into his hands, Francis said, "I have a favour to ask of you, which I am sure you will not refuse, since it only concerns God's Glory, to which I know you are devoted."

The young priest answered that he was ready to obey his Bishop's commands.

"Oh no!" the saint replied, "it is not a command, only a request, and that for the love of God." He then opened the box, which was full of wafers for consecration, saying, "You are a priest; God has given you this holy vocation and given you a charge of souls. What would you think of an artizan, a lawyer, or a physician who would only exercise his calling once or twice a week? Your vocation is to celebrate Mass daily, why do you not do so? There is nothing, thank God, that should hinder you. I know your soul's state as well as it is possible for one man to know another, and I see every reason why you should do it. I therefore make you this offering, and beg you not to forget me at holy altar."

The priest was somewhat taken by surprise, and

without refusing the advice so kindly given, alleged his youth, his conscious unworthiness, and lack of self-mortification, and his consequent dread of profaning the great mysteries through an inconsistent life.

"All this is so much self-accusation, if we were to go into it," the Bishop said. "But to waive further discussion, you have submitted yourself to my judgment; I therefore tell you (and I think that in this I have the Spirit of God) all the reasons you give for abstaining from constant exercise of your priestly office have a precisely opposite tendency. The continual habit of this holy function will ripen your youth, moderate your self-indulgence, avert temptation, strengthen what is weak, enlighten what is dark, and as you go on, you will learn to fulfil your vocation better and better. Moreover, if a sense of unworthiness lead you to abstain, as was the case occasionally with S. Bonaventura; or if you felt that you profit less than is right, through your own unfitness, remember that you hold a public charge the fulfilment of which is not only due to yourself, but to your flock living and dead; and, moreover, when you abstain from celebrating, you deprive God in a measure of His Glory, and the saints and angels of their joy and consolation in you."

The young priest yielded to his Bishop's counsel, saying, "*Fiat, fiat;*" and during thirty years that have elapsed since it was given, he has never unnecessarily omitted his daily celebration.

§ II. *Preparation and thanksgiving.*

Francis had been told that I spent a long time in preparation for Mass, and that it was a cause of inconvenience to many. Wishing to correct me of this error, he took the opportunity during one of his annual visits to Belley, when a quantity of letters

had detained him unusually late in his room. Eleven o'clock came, and he had not yet said his Mass, which he never omitted unless through illness or some other unavoidable hindrance. So at last the Bishop appeared in the chapel, said a brief prayer before the altar, robed himself, and said Mass. When it was over, he again said a short prayer; and rejoining us with his beautiful calm face, as it had been an angel, he entered into conversation till—as speedily happened—we were summoned to table. I was always studying his every action, and I was somewhat surprised at this shortened preparation and thanksgiving; so in the evening, when we were alone, I used the freedom of a son in saying, "*Mon père*, it strikes me that you are very rapid for a man of your piety! Both your preparation and thanksgiving this morning struck me as wonderfully quick!" "My dear friend, I am so much obliged to you for speaking the truth so plainly," Francis answered, "for I have wanted to say something of a similar kind to you for several days, without knowing quite how to begin. What have you to say for your lengthy ways, which bother everybody? Every one grumbles about it, though perhaps their complaints have not reached you, as but few people dare to tell the truth to dignitaries. I suppose they have commissioned me to do so because no one else cares so much for you. Don't doubt that I have a good many clients, although they are nameless. It is a pity that we cannot make an exchange—you to go faster and I not so fast. But what a very funny thing it is to find the Bishop of Belley rebuking the Bishop of Geneva for being too quick, and Geneva rebuking Belley for being too slow. Surely the world must be turned upside down!"

He went on to say, "You should remember that those who assist at your Mass are really inconvenienced by all your lengthy devotions beforehand

in the sacristy; and still more the people who are waiting to see you on business after service."

"But, *mon père*," I answered, "how is one to prepare for Holy Mass?"

"Why do you not make your preparation the first thing in the morning, during your meditation, which I am sure you never omit?"

"But I get up at four o'clock in the summer," I argued, "and I do not go to the altar till nine or ten."

"Do you imagine that such an interval of four or five hours is so important in the Eyes of Him to Whom a thousand years is as one day?"

"Well, then, as to the Thanksgiving?"

"Wait for that till your evening devotions. Do you not include that most solemn office in your examination of conscience? and is not thanksgiving one point of such examination? Both these duties are best performed at night and morning; they are better and more quietly done: nobody is inconvenienced; your rightful calls are not interfered with."

"But is it not unedifying to be so quick in such solemn actions?" I asked. "God does not like us to serve Him as we run."

"Run as fast as we will," Francis answered, "God goes faster than we; His Spirit 'runneth from east to west.' He is present everywhere; there is neither past nor future for Him—'whither shall we go from His Presence?'"

I need hardly say that I submitted to the Bishop's advice, and have learnt its wisdom by experience.

§ III. *The Bishop's readiness to receive little offerings.*

Following out his maxim of asking nothing and refusing nothing, the Bishop made a point of receiving the little presents brought him by the poor, even when administering the Sacraments. It was

really touching to see the hearty kindliness with which he would accept a handful of nuts or chestnuts, a few apples, a little cheese, or one or two eggs offered to him by children or some of his poor people. Sometimes *liards* or *sous* were brought, and he would accept them with words of thanks. Occasionally he would receive three or four *sous* from some far off village, for masses to be said, which he would say himself with the greatest care. The money thus received he always gave to the poor whom he met on leaving church, but he used to take the eatables home in his pocket, and put them on the table, or give them to his steward, on condition that they were served up; saying sometimes, "*Labores manuum tuarum quia manducabis, beatus es, et bene tibi erit.*" He was fond of quoting what S. Paul says about labouring with one's own hands, as also the sayings, "Man is born to work, as the birds to fly;" and "If any will not work, neither shall he eat;" and he would add playfully, that if man could live without toil, and women bear children without suffering, they would have won the suit against God!

§ IV. *Diversity in direction.*

When Francis was in Paris in 1619 many pious souls sought his guidance in matters concerning their inner life; and he pondered much upon the many ways by which God leads souls to Himself, as also the various methods used by His servants in the direction of souls. Among others, he told me that he had specially studied the habits of two eminent directors, both celebrated preachers, both most holy and devoted in their own lives, who nevertheless took diametrically opposite lines in their treatment of souls, although they alike had but one aim, to serve God perfectly. One of these was most severe in his direction and in preaching—

his sermons all insisting upon mortification, austerities, perpetual self-examination, and rigid observances. Thus through fear he led men to strict obedience to God's law, and great care as to what concerned their salvation; not encouraging scruples, but keeping those under him in a wonderful state of subjection. The result was that his spiritual children feared God, shunned sin as a serpent, and were most diligent in the practice of virtue.

The other director sought only to lead souls to God: his sermons were all upon God's love; he aimed rather at teaching men to love the good than hate evil, and to love that good more because it pleases God than because it is pleasant in itself. The result of this kind of teaching was to fill souls with a very pure and earnest love of God and of their neighbours for God's Sake. God's ways are diverse among His children, and there are sundry roads which all lead to the same end.

§ V. *Encouragement to the penitent.*

A woman of high rank who had sinned grievously came to Francis de Sales for confession, and after detailing a most unworthy life, she exclaimed at last, "*Mon père*, what must you think of me henceforth!"

"As a saint," he answered.

"That would be in defiance of your knowledge and your conscience."

"Neither the one nor the other," Francis replied.

"How so?" the lady asked.

"I do not pretend to be so ignorant of what goes on in the world as not to know some of the things reported concerning you," the Bishop said, "and I was sorely grieved, both because of the offence towards God and for your good name, which I could not defend; but now that you are reconciled to God by sincere repentance, I have wherewithal to defend

you against man or devil, and I shall be able to deny whatever may be said against you."

"But, Father, it will be true as concerning what is past?"

"No good man will remember that," the Saint said, "and as to the judgments of Pharisees, such as were cast at the penitent Magdalene, Jesus Christ Himself will be your defender."

"But you yourself, what must you think of my past life?"

"Nothing at all," he answered. "In the first place I am bound not to think of it, and moreover how would you have me dwell upon what is for ever done away, and is blotted out in God's Sight? Put this care as to what I think away from your mind; my only thought about you is to praise and thank God, and to join with the angels who rejoice over your conversion."

The lady in question told this herself to one who knew her well, adding that as the Bishop's tears fell fast, she supposed him to be weeping at the heinousness of her sins—"Not so," he said; "I weep for joy over your resurrection to the life of grace."

Our dear Father used often to express his sympathy with S. Teresa's liking for the lives of those Saints who had been great sinners, because the brightness of God's Mercy shone so marvellously from without the depths of their misery.

§ VI. *The Bishop's dealings with a despairing criminal.*

Francis was requested to go and see a condemned criminal, who had given himself up to despair, and could not be induced to make confession of his sins. On approaching the man, he proved to be stubborn in persisting that he was doomed to hell, a victim of the devil. "My brother," Francis said, "would

you not rather be saved of God, be the victim of the Cross?"

"How can you ask me?" the culprit exclaimed. "But what has God to do with one so steeped in sin as I am?"

Francis mentally called upon God to remember His lovingkindness of old, His promise not to quench the smoking flax, or break the bruised reed, not to will the death of the sinner, but his repentance and life; and he prayed fervently that this poor perishing soul might yet be saved, even at the last moment.

"Anyhow," he resumed, "you would rather give yourself up to God than to the devil?"

"What has such a one as I am to do with God?" was the only answer.

"It was for such as you," the saintly Bishop said, "that the Eternal Father sent His Son into the world—for such men as Judas, and those who crucified Him. He came to seek and to save not just men, but sinners."

"But is it not sheer presumption in me to seek His Mercy?"

"There can be no presumption so great," Francis replied, "as to doubt that His Mercy is infinite, or that His redemption cannot cause grace much more to abound where sin did abound. His Mercy, which is over all His works, exceeds His Justice, and the greater our sins, the greater its might; our misery is as the footstool of His Throne."

With such words as these the Bishop reached the faint lingering spark of faith in the poor sinner's heart, and led him to cast himself upon God's Mercy for time and for Eternity. "He must condemn me," the wretched man cried out, "and that because He is Just."

"But He will forgive, if you ask for mercy; He is Merciful, and has promised forgiveness to all who ask it with a contrite and humble heart."

"Let Him do as He will!" the criminal exclaimed; "I am His to condemn—as the clay in the potter's hand."

"Rather say with David, 'Lord, I am Thine; save me!'"

The interview ended in the unhappy criminal being led to make a most contrite confession, and he died a true penitent, trusting wholly to God's Mercy. His last words, prompted by Francis de Sales, were, "O Jesus, I give myself up wholly to Thee."

I have often heard our dear Father say that God would never let that soul be lost which at the last moment submitted its will wholly to the Divine Will. Accordingly, when ministering to the dying, his great aim was to lead them to submit their will to God. "Thy Will, my God, Thy Will!" were the words he continually reiterated. "As it seemeth good in Thy Sight;" "Thy Will, not mine, be done."

§ VII. *Francis' dealings with penitents.*

A man once came to the Bishop for confession, narrating his sins with such boldness and levity, and such a total absence of compunction, that it seemed rather as though he were telling an amusing story than making his confession. Perceiving that the integral parts of a good confession were thus entirely wanting, and that the so-called penitent was deficient even in common shame, Francis listened without interrupting the flow of words save by his own sighs and tears. His penitent asked if he was ill? "I am well, brother, thank God," the Bishop answered, "but you, alas! are far from being the same." The gentleman said he was all right, and went on in the same hardened strain. Francis' tears fell yet more freely. His penitent inquired their cause. "Truly, I weep because you do not weep," was the reply. The hard heart was

touched at this. He, the guilty, to feel no grief or shame for those sins which caused the tears of a saint to flow! Now for the first time really penitent and sorrow-struck, he fell at the Bishop's feet, asking what to do; and after teaching him to make an act of contrition, Francis prepared the hitherto stubborn soil for the grace of God's Sacraments, and had the comfort of seeing the scoffing spirit yield to hearty repentance and faith. It was the gentleman himself who told these facts, adding that whereas many confessors made their penitents weep, he for his part had made his confessor weep! "Of a truth though," he said, "the Bishop paid me out, and that, thank God, to my soul's gain, for I am changed indeed, and I trust never to lose the blessing given me through his hands. 'Come and see what the Lord hath done for my soul.'"

§ VIII. *The Bishop's tenderness.*

A personal friend of the Bishop brought himself at a great cost to make a general confession of his past life, and, deeply touched with its earnestness and sincerity, Francis expressed some such feeling to the penitent.

"You speak thus to comfort me," was the answer, "but you cannot really feel any esteem for so great a sinner."

"I should be a very Pharisee," Francis replied, "if I held you as such now that you are absolved. You are as white as snow in my eyes, pure as Naaman issuing forth from Jordan, and I love you tenfold. The confidence and affection you have shown for me made me count you as my own son begotten in Jesus Christ, or rather as one in whose heart Jesus Christ has been planted by my ministry; and my esteem waxes with my love, as I see you changed by God's Hand from a vessel of impurity to one of sanctification. Our Lord did not alter

His intention of building His Church upon S. Peter because of that Apostle's fall, regarding his repentance and his tears rather than his sin. Nor can I refrain from sharing the joy of the angels over the conversion and cleansing of your dear heart. Believe me, your tears have refreshed my soul, and I love you in proportion as you love God." This penitent left the tribunal so touched that he told a friend no earthly pleasure could be so sweet as such a confession. His cry became, *Amplius lava me*, and he was wont to call Francis de Sales the Angel of the Pool of Bethesda.

§ IX. *His dealings with the sick.*

On one occasion we went together to visit a lady of rank in my diocese who was old and very ill. She had already received her viaticum; and we found her perfectly calm and peaceful, having put her house in order. The only thing that disturbed her was that her children gave themselves no rest day or night for striving to make her comfortable. When she made this complaint, our dear Father said, "For my part, chère mère, when I am ill, I am never better pleased than when I see my relations and friends taking all manner of trouble for me."

We asked him why? "Because," he answered, "I know that God will reward them abundantly for all that they have done for me; such offerings are most acceptable to Him. If those who minister to our need, either in sickness or health, think more of us than of God, more is the pity; but if they serve us for His Sake, they are rather to be envied than pitied."

Our dear Father was as a very angel beside the sick and dying, with his gentle, loving suggestions, his happily timed words of comfort, his brief ejaculatory prayers and aspirations: "O Jesus,

I give myself wholly to Thee." "My God, I am Thine; save me for Thy Mercy's sake." "Father, into Thy Hands I commend my soul and body, my whole being. Thy Will be done, not mine." Such words he taught the sufferer to say audibly or in his heart, at such intervals as his weakness permitted. He could not bear to see sick or dying people disturbed by lengthy exhortations. That is not the time, he said, for preaching, or even for long prayers; rather strive to keep the soul in an attitude of submission to that Divine Will which is soon to absorb its whole existence in another life.

Sometimes Francis used to render the last offices of mercy to condemned criminals, accompanying them to the very scaffold, and teaching them how to meet death in the same way as he taught the sick. When a man's conscience was lightened by confession, he would give him an interval of rest, and then gradually suggest acts of faith, hope, love, repentance and resignation, and trust in God's Mercy, sedulously avoiding the aggravation to their inevitable sufferings of a continuous flow of words. It has happened that Francis' dealings with such unhappy men have been so successful that they have died far more hopefully than they had lived. "Those who bow at the feet of God's Justice," he used to say, "attain most surely to the arms of His Mercy, and we may believe with the most absolute certainty that those who trust in Him will never be confounded." He loved to quote the words of S. Augustine, "I had rather die loving God than live to offend Him."

§ X. *His dealings with the dying.*

Once during a visitation tour Francis was summoned to a worthy peasant who greatly desired to receive his Bishop's blessing before his death. Francis, who never refused such a summons, went

to the good old man, and found him well-nigh dying, but perfectly clear in mind. He was delighted to see his saintly Bishop, and said, "Monseigneur, I bless God for granting me the happiness of receiving your benediction before I die." Having made his confession, he asked, "Monseigneur, do you think that I am dying?"

Francis concluded that some natural fear had come over the sick man, and he answered tenderly that he had seen men as dangerously ill recover, but that the best thing was to put one's whole trust in God, for life or death.

"Ah but, Monseigneur, do you think that I am dying?"

"My son," the Bishop answered, "a doctor would be more able to judge of that than I am, but I am able to tell you that I think you well prepared to die, and possibly at a future time you might be less ready to go hence. Your best course is to put aside all longings after life, and to give yourself up wholly into God's Hands, leaving Him to work out His own pleasure, which is sure to be the best and happiest thing for you."

"O Monseigneur," the peasant exclaimed, "I do not ask you this because I am afraid to die, but because of all things I dread recovery."

Francis was somewhat surprised at this, knowing that the wish to die is generally found either in those who have attained the highest perfection, or else in such as are extremely far from it, and who give way to melancholy or despair. So he asked the sick man whence this unwillingness to live, which is so contrary to nature, arose?

"Monseigneur," he answered, "this life is so worthless, I cannot think why men cling to it; and if I did not know that God wills us to abide here till He calls us hence, I should not be alive now."

Supposing that some grievous affliction must have caused such indifference to life, Francis

inquired whether the old peasant had any hidden sorrow, mental or bodily.

"Far from it," was the reply. "I am seventy, and so far I have had the blessing of perfect health, and I have never tasted the sting of poverty, thank God."

"Have you had great family troubles?"

"Never any whatsoever," he replied, "and if I have any regret in leaving this world, it is the parting from my wife and children."

"Whence then, brother, your longing to die?" Francis asked.

"Monseigneur," the peasant answered, "every sermon I have ever heard has taught me so much concerning the joys of Paradise that this world has gradually grown to look like a mere prison." And pouring forth the abundance of his heart, the dying man spoke such glowing words concerning the next life that Francis' tears fell fast as he listened, seeing plainly that flesh and blood had not revealed such things to his happy penitent, but God's Holy Spirit only. Before leaving him, however, the Bishop made the good old man make sundry acts of perfect readiness to live or die, and but a few short hours after, having received extreme unction from his beloved Bishop, the happy soul departed peacefully to the rest he had so earnestly longed for.

CHAPTER III.

ON PREACHING.

§ I. *Importance of frequent preaching.*

FRANCIS heard casually that I had been blamed for preaching in my diocese, through Advent and Lent, on Sundays and festivals. He replied that to blame a husbandman for over-cultivating his land was neither more nor less than commendation. Fearing, however, lest I might be disheartened at such blame, he referred to his own experience. "I had the best father in the world," he said, "but he had spent the greater part of his life in the camp or the court. When I was Provost I used to preach on every occasion, whether in the cathedral or the parish churches, down to the smallest confraternities; I never refused any one. 'Give to them that ask.' My dear father used to hear the bells ringing, and ask who preached? 'Who but your son!' At last he took me aside, and said, 'Provost, indeed you preach too much; even on week-days I hear the sermon bell going, and it is for ever the Provost, the Provost! In my time it was very different; sermons were much rarer, but goodness knows what real preachments they were! so studied, so learned—more Latin and Greek in one than you stick into a dozen! Everybody was edified and delighted; they trooped to listen as if they expected to pick up manna; but now you make sermons such everyday matters that nobody thinks much of them or you!' You see, my dear old father said what he thought; you may believe that it was from no lack of love to me, but

he went by the world's maxims. Believe me, we don't preach half enough. '*Nunquam satis dicitur quod nunquam satis discitur*;' above all now, in this close proximity to heresy, a heresy which is chiefly upheld by preaching, and which can only be met by preaching the truth."

§ II. *Francis' zeal in preaching.*

The last time he was in Paris (for eight months) he was so generally sought that he had to preach almost daily, the result of which was a short but very dangerous illness. Some of those who loved him and grudged such a sacrifice were not satisfied with warning him that he was killing himself, to which he only replied that those whose work was to give light to the world might well be consumed in so doing; they went on to urge that he led men to undervalue God's gifts by making them too common. "What one can have any day," they said, "becomes comparatively unimportant. We all gaze in admiration at the moon, but who thinks of getting up to see the sun rise, although it is a far grander light?"

"Well, then," Francis said, "I must set up a *vicaire* to say 'no' for me, because the very commission I bear teaches me that we are debtors to all men, and that we are bound to give to all that ask; as also that true charity does not heed its own interests, only those of God and one's neighbour; so how can I reject those who seek me? It would not only be uncourteous, it would be a real breach of brotherly love. We ought to strive to imitate the saint who would fain be blotted out of the Book of Life for his brothers' sake, or be anathema maranatha for them." He carried out this rule of asking nothing and refusing nothing so diligently that I can honestly say I never asked him anything rightful which was not granted, or, if refused, the refusal

was obviously mere justice. His inevitable refusals were so gracefully made that they were more welcome than another man's consent less happily given. Nor have I ever heard of his refusing any reasonable or possible request.

§ III. *Francis' readiness to preach.*

Francis de Sales literally obeyed the Divine precepts, "Give to him that asketh of thee;" "Deal thy bread to the hungry." In truth, his own temporalities were so scant that it was a marvel how he could give as he did. I used often to think that God must renew the miraculous increase of loaves in his favour. As to spiritual food, he was more than liberal of it, he was fairly prodigal; never refusing the consolations of religion to any one, whether in public or private, saying that he feared the reproach, "The young children ask bread, and no man breaks it them." His own provision of this spiritual bread was so unfailing, that he was always ready to impart it gladly.

I used often to wonder how ready he was in preaching, remembering that he was disposed to be somewhat slow of speech. Once while in Paris, when he was asked to preach on some festival, having as usual consented to do so, one of his attendants reminded the Bishop that he had already promised to preach elsewhere on that same day. "Never mind," was the answer, "God will graciously multiply our loaves. He is plenteous in mercy to all them that call upon Him." It was suggested that his health might suffer. "If God strengthens and supplies the mind with what has to be said, do you not think He will take care of the body too? Trust in Him, and He will be our strength."

Some one replied that God does not forbid care of the body. "Certainly not," Francis answered, "but He does forbid mistrust in His Goodness."

And he put an end to the discussion by saying, "I can assure you that if I am asked for a third sermon on that same day, it would cost me less bodily and mentally to give than refuse it. I will give body and soul so far as I may for those dear brethren whom our Lord loved so much that He died for them."

§ IV. *Francis de Sales preaching in Paris.*

The preacher's office may well be likened to that of the sower, who casts his seed into the earth unknowing what will become of it. A certain sermon upon the Last Judgment, which the Bishop of Geneva preached in Paris, was so blessed to the souls of several Protestants who came to hear him that they sought Francis in private, and were finally converted. "I had been preaching," he said, "in the Queen's chapel, upon the Last Judgment (not controversially). Mdme. de Perdreauville came out of curiosity, and was taken captive by the truth, so that three weeks later she and her whole family came to me for confession, and I was their godfather at their confirmation. You see, although my sermon was in no way levelled against heresy, it practically told against it, God thus graciously using me as an instrument to win these souls. Ever since I have always maintained that he who preaches with love preaches sufficiently against heresy without introducing one word of controversy. Certainly, during thirty-three years in which God has called me to the sacred work of feeding my people with His Word, I have observed that earnest sermons on matters of practical holiness are as so many live coals cast among Protestants; they listen, are edified, and become more accessible to doctrinal teaching. All the best preachers I know agree with me in this, as in thinking that the pulpit is not a proper field for controversy, and that one casts down more than one builds

up when touching upon such matters otherwise than casually in preaching."

§ V. *Object of preaching.*

Francis used to say that it was not enough for a preacher to have a general intention of teaching God's ways; he ought to aim at some particular point in each sermon;—as, for instance, explaining some doctrine or mystery, conquering a special vice, or inculcating a special virtue. "You can hardly believe," he used to say, "how important this is, or how many well thought out, ably written sermons fail to be useful for want of following this rule. It will make your sermons profitable to the hearers, but otherwise they may be very much admired, and yet bring forth no results."

When he was told that any preacher was greatly applauded, Francis would ask, "In what graces does he excel? humility, mortification, gentleness, courage, devotion, or what?" If the answer was that the priest in question preached admirably, he would say, "But that is saying, not doing, which is a far easier matter. There are plenty of people who say and do not, and destroy the good effect produced by their words through evil deeds. I cannot abide a man whose tongue is busier than his hands."

Some one said of a preacher who was greatly sought after, "He has done wonders to-day." "He does wonders," Francis observed, "who is spotless before God, and who does not seek this world's gifts or treasures."

On another occasion it was remarked of the same preacher that he had excelled himself. "What hidden renunciation has he made?" the Bishop asked. "What injury has he borne patiently? Those are the occasions when a man excels himself."

"Do you care to know," he asked, "how I

estimate the excellence of a preacher? If the congregation go away smiting their breasts, and saying, 'I will do so and so,' I think well of the sermon, not when they are all crying out, 'What a beautiful sermon! what an eloquent man!' Eloquence and touching words are human gifts, but when sinners are converted and turn from their wicked ways, we may be sure that God is speaking through His servant's lips, and that preacher has the gift of counsel and the knowledge of the Saints. The true aim of preaching is that sin be abolished, and righteousness abound on the earth. God sends preachers, as Jesus Christ sent His Apostles, that they may bring forth fruit, and their fruit should remain."

§ VI. *Indifference to the world's opinion.*

On one occasion, when I was going to preach a Lent course in Paris, Francis was bidding me pay little heed to the world's opinion, and he illustrated his advice by the following anecdote:—"The Superior of a convent committed the charge of the convent clock to a certain old man, who wanted something to occupy him; but ere long he complained that he had never been given a more troublesome or vexatious task.

"'What, winding up the weights twice a day?' the Superior exclaimed, in amazement.

"'Oh no, it is not that, it is that I am so worried on all sides. If the clock is a few moments slow, the students from within are down upon me, and then if, to please them, I put it on a few minutes, the other students grumble and say our time is fast. Perhaps I put it back to silence their complaints, and the others begin again, till my poor head might as well be the clapper of the bell itself, I am so bothered with the whole thing.'

"The Superior comforted the poor old man by

telling him to give kind words to all, but meanwhile to let the clock be, and not try to adapt its time to one or other.

"Now you will be exposed to all manner of criticisms," Francis went on to say, "and if you trouble yourself as to what is said of you, there will be no end to it. Your course must be to be courteous to everybody; but, meanwhile, go your own way, be rational, do not try to follow all the contradictory advice you are certain to receive; fix your mind on God, and follow the leadings of His Grace. We ought to care but little for men's judgment, since our object is not to please them; God is our Judge, and He sees into the most hidden corners of our hearts."

§ VII. *Saying and doing.*

The Son of God, our Great Example, the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, began to do and to teach; He was thirty years doing, and only three teaching, thus showing us that we must heed what we do more than what we say. Moreover, He condemned those who say and do not, who lay burdens on other men's shoulders which they themselves would not touch with their little finger. Not that He would have us judge the truth of a doctrine by the life and habits of him who preaches it, but He would teach how far a holy life goes towards winning men to heed the preacher. How can he convince men of that of which he is not himself convinced? Such an one is like a trumpeter sounding the charge, but not joining the battle; like a ladder which leads upwards, but stops short of the entrance; like a sign-post which points out the road along which it never goes itself.

§ VIII. *Good preaching known by its fruits.*

When the Bishop heard people talk of wonderful preachers, he would ask whether they converted many souls? saying that the conversion of souls is a greater work than raising the dead, inasmuch as it is a passing from the death of sin to the life of grace. And if the wonders meant proved to be eloquence, learning, memory, graceful action, or the like personal gifts, he would remark that all such are common to mere secular oratory, and to be obtained by earthly means; but heavenly gifts, such as win men to know God and become saints, come from the Holy Spirit alone. "When you have been preaching, beware of taking delight in the empty applause poured out upon you. 'What eloquence! what learning!' 'Such a memory, such grace.' 'It is delightful to listen,' and the like. All this is empty chatter coming forth from empty brains. S. Jerome says that the Christian preacher should not cultivate the artifices of rhetoric, but content himself with the simplicity of fishermen, *i.e.* the Apostles; and if S. Paul condemns listeners who have itching ears, how much more does he condemn those preachers whose aim is to tickle such ears with fanciful words, choice illustrations, and artistic combinations. But if after a sermon you find a few hearers who cry out, with the centurion, 'Truly this is the Son of God;' who have learnt to know Christ crucified, and who say of the preacher, 'It will not be his fault if we do not turn from our evil ways; this sermon will rise up against us in the Last Judgment if we do not make good use of the warning;' if they have learnt the needfulness of penitence, the blessing of holiness, or if their lives give token that the lesson has sunk deep into their hearts, then indeed you may pronounce the preacher to be excellent, and able to promote,—not his own glory,

but God's Glory, Who gives His Holy Spirit to His servant and speaks through him."

"A well-known preacher came to me at Annecy," Francis said, "and at my request he preached to my people. His sermon was in so exalted a style, so pompous and so magniloquent, that all the good *montagnards* were astounded. When the sermon was over, every one poured forth torrents of admiration; it was a contest who should say the most complimentary things. Knowing that in many respects the discourse was far over the heads of its admirers, I asked various people privately what they recollected in detail, and what they had gained from it, but in vain; nobody could answer me. One more honest than the rest said, 'If I could understand and remember it, there would have been nothing out of the common way: one admires chiefly because of one's ignorance. This preacher dwelt upon great and sublime matters which are beyond our reach, and so he makes us think very highly of the grandeur of our religion.'"

Francis was amused by the answer, and said that this man had certainly gained somewhat by the sermon. Spring flowers are all very well, but alas for us if the autumn fruits fail! The preacher who produces naught save beautiful ideas and fine language is like a tree bearing leaves only, which is in danger of being cut down and cast into the fire. "I have chosen you," the Lord said to His Apostles, "that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain."

§ IX. *Fine words and barren results.*

In the year 1610 I was asked to preach the Lent Station at Chambéry, before the Senate of Savoy. I had only been consecrated a few months, and being very young, and my head full of the schools and of *belles lettres*, to which I was greatly addicted.

my sermons were rather a pouring forth of artificial stores of memory than the result of any experience or mental effort of my own. I brought forth "things old and new" from my literary acquisitions in these first attempts, until a report reached the blessed Francis at Annecy that my preaching was all flowers and fancy, which attracted listeners just as honey attracts flies. Such human display did not at all satisfy him; he wished for more divine and less earthly knowledge, more religious depth and less demonstration. Accordingly, he wrote me a playful letter, saying that the aroma of my discourses had been wafted to him, and he felt like Alexander, who scented the Fortunate Isles from afar as he crossed the ocean! But after preparing the way with all this soft dressing, he plunged the lancet sharply in, adding that having heard so much of the flowers and foliage of my vineyard, he hoped next to hear of an abundant harvest and vintage. "I wait," he said, "*an flores fructus parturiant.*" And he went on to advise me to put aside my superabundant *belles lettres*—"*tempus putationis advenit;*" to prune my vine and cut away all this florid ornamentation, adding that if it is lawful to apply the vessels of Egypt to the service of the tabernacle, it must anyhow be discreetly done;—Rachel is more winning, though less fruitful than Leah; the Gospel should be interpreted according to its own spirit of simplicity; good theology needs neither white nor vermilion, and we are bound to beware of issuing false spiritual coin, quite as much as false secular money. By this means the dear Bishop taught me to be more sparing of my frothy diet, and to give better heed to that "meat which perisheth not," of which Holy Scripture speaks.

§ X. *Magniloquence.*

One day I was to preach at the Convent of the

Visitation, and knowing that our dear Father would be there as well as a great many more, I must confess that I was rather self-conscious, and had aimed at producing a good effect. As soon as we were alone in his house, he said, "Well, you have pleased our good folk not a little to-day; they were all crying out *mirabilia* at your well-got-up panegyric. I only know one person who was not satisfied."

"Indeed!" I answered. "What could I have said to displease that individual?—not, forsooth, that I much care to know who it is!"

"But I have a great wish to tell you," Francis said.

"Who may it be, then, that I may try to please him better?"

"If I had not great confidence in you I should not tell you, but as it is, I mean to do so:—you behold him."

I looked about, and saw no one, save himself. "Is it you?" I asked.

"Myself," was the answer.

"Indeed," I exclaimed, "I would rather have had your approbation than that of all the rest put together! However, thank God, yours is a hand which never strikes save to heal, so tell me all about it, for I know well that in your love for me you overlook nothing."

"I care for you too much to flatter you," Francis replied, "and if you had cared for our Sisters in like manner you would not have amused yourself at their expense; puffing them up instead of edifying them, praising them instead of setting some wholesome, humbling truths before them. Such windy words are sorry food, and a good sermon ought to aim at supplying the hearers not with mere sounding brass, but with meat that endureth unto life. You should never go into the pulpit without a definite purpose to build up some special corner of the walls of Jerusalem; to incul-

cate some particular virtue, or to expose some particular vice, for the true end of all preaching is to uproot sin, and lead men to righteousness. 'I will teach Thy ways unto the wicked, and sinners shall be converted unto Thee.'"

"But what need is there to preach conversion to such souls as these?" I asked—"women who have been long since set free from their enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil, and who serve God in the beauty of holiness?"

"You should teach them," he answered, "to beware lest they fall, if indeed they stand,—to work out their salvation in fear and trembling, as the Holy Spirit enjoins, and not to be wholly without fear even as concerning sins that are remitted. But you pictured them as so many living saints —a very easy way of canonising living beings. Indeed, it will not do to stop up people's ears in this fashion, or to give milk where bitter tonics are needed!"

"I intended to encourage and confirm them in their holy undertaking," was my defence.

"Another time try to do that without exposing people to the danger of presumption and vanity. It is always safer to keep your hearer humble than to lead him along slippery paths which are beyond his ken. I am sure you will remember this for the future."

§ XI. *The Bishop of Belley makes amends.*

The next day Francis made me preach at a monastery of the Poor Clares;—he was there himself, together with as large a congregation as on the previous day. I took good care to shun the error he had pointed out, and my discourse was strictly simple in idea and expression, having no aim but the hearers' edification. I was very practical, and pressed the subject home. When we went home,

the dear Bishop came to my room (which, indeed, was his own, for he always gave it to me when I stayed with him), and embracing me, he said, "Of a truth, I loved you yesterday, but I love you still better to-day! You are quite after my own heart now, and if I mistake not after God's Heart too. I am sure He will accept your sacrifice. Indeed, I did not think you were so obedient and pliable! The obedient spirit wins victories, and in truth you have conquered yourself to-day. Do you know that most of your hearers were comparing yesterday's sermon and to-day's? they were not so well pleased to-day, but, on the contrary, your dissatisfied critic of yesterday was well pleased. Now, I give you a plenary absolution for all your past mistakes. If you go on thus, you will do real good service to the Lord of the vineyard. Preaching must not be shaped according to the rules of worldly wisdom, but by God's Holy Spirit and truth. Seek this faithfully, and God will bless and fulfil your work; you will acquire His Own mystical learning, the science of saints, that which made them what they were. What need we to know, save Jesus Christ and Him Crucified?"

§ XII. *The Bishop of Belley seeks to imitate Francis de Sales.*

In my exceeding veneration for the Bishop of Geneva, all he did charmed me, and I took it into my head to imitate his style of preaching. I do not mean that I presumed to imitate the elevation of his thoughts, the depth of his doctrine, or his forcible reasoning, or the general charm of his discourses, which so won the attention and hearts of his hearers—all that was beyond my reach. No, like a fly crawling on the edge of a mirror, I aimed—but unsuccessfully—at imitating his external action and his pronunciation. Naturally these were slow and

dignified with him; just the contrary with me, and the change was so marvellous that no one could recognise me. I had spoilt my original, and made a miserable copy! Francis heard of all this, and one day, leading gradually to the subject, he said, "*A propos* to sermons, the last news is that you have taken a fancy to imitate the Bishop of Geneva?"

I tried to turn the attack by saying, "Well, and after all, is he a bad example? Don't you think that he preaches a great deal better than I do?"

"Oh, if you come to that," Francis answered, "we will grant that he is not amiss; but the worst of the matter is that I am told you imitate him so badly that no one can tell what you are at; and that while you spoil the Bishop of Belley, you do not in any way succeed in copying the Bishop of Geneva;—in short, you ought to do like that sorry painter who wrote the name of his subjects beneath the daubs he produced, to tell what they meant to represent!"

"Leave the poor Bishop of Belley alone," I said, "and you will see that by degrees he will cease to be an apprentice, and become a master, so that his copies will pass for originals!"

"Joking apart," Francis said, "you are spoiling yourself, and destroying one edifice to build up another, contrary to all the rules of nature and art; and at your age, if once you take to bad habits, it will not be easy to change them. If one could change one's original conformation, I would gladly accept yours. I am always trying to drive myself on, but the more I try the slower I go: I cannot find words, or utter them when found; I am heavier than lead. I cannot rouse myself or others; I toil and I sweat, and make no way, while you go on with full sails. You fly, and I crawl or drag along like a tortoise. You have more fire in the tip of your finger than I in my whole body. Naturally

you are as rapid in your flight as a bird, and now they tell me that you weigh your words and drag out your sentences, and weary your listeners to death."

I can assure you that this remedy was thoroughly efficacious, and I never ventured to repeat the fault.

§ XIII. *Ill-timed praise.*

S. Gregory says that to praise a good man to his face is to wound his ear and afflict his heart. Francis de Sales certainly thought so. He who listened so readily to words of rebuke would gladly have rebuked all who bestowed the smallest commendation upon him. One day when preaching at Annecy I remembered how the Bishop of Saluces had said to Francis, playing upon both their names, "*Tu sal es, ego vero neque sal neque lux*," and I indulged in an allusion to his name, saying that he was the salt (*sal es*) which seasoned the diocese. Francis was so displeased at this that when we returned home he tackled me with as much severity of tone and manner as was possible for him. "You were going on so well," he said, "why need you have made such a stupid blunder? Do you know you spoilt everything, and that one sentence ruined the whole sermon. Why should you sully the pure gold of God's Word by introducing such mere human thoughts? What can be more worldly than to praise living men? Remember what the Wise Man says, 'Count no man happy before his death.'

"A pretty sort of salt I am, to be sure! a savourless concern, fit for nothing but to be cast into the street and trodden under foot. I mourn over the good seed choked under my handful of tares. At all events if your object was utterly to humiliate me, you have thoroughly succeeded."

§ XIV. *How to use Holy Scripture in preaching.*

S. Carlo Borromeo never read Holy Scripture save on his knees, as though hearing God speak from Mount Sinai; and in like manner our dear Saint could not bear His Word to be used, whether in private study or public speaking, save with the deepest reverence. He objected to a preacher rushing straight to the mystical interpretation of Holy Scripture, without first explaining the literal meaning; a method which he likened to trying to raise the roof before digging the foundation. "Holy Scripture should be treated more seriously and reverently; it is not a piece of stuff to be cut and shaped into any kind of garment men please," he used to say.

When the actual sense of the words had been explained, he allowed mystical and moral interpretations to be deduced, but even then judiciously, and not strained to the utmost. He used to say that such overdrawn applications were like a *carillon* of bells, which may be imagined to say whatever one wills. For instance:—once when preaching before Francis, I applied the Prophet's words, "With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure, and with the froward unsavoury," [1] to the contagion of evil company, a comparison not unfrequently made. I saw at once that he was not pleased, and when we were next alone together, he asked me why I had distorted this passage, knowing its literal meaning. I replied that such an application might be inferred; but he maintained that at all events I ought to have said that this was not the literal meaning, which refers solely to God, Who is Merciful to those that are good, and stern to such as are evil. You may gather from this how particular he was himself, being always so much more indulgent to others than to himself.

[1] 2 Sam. xxii. 27.

§ XV. *Short sermons.*

Francis greatly approved of short sermons, saying that lengthiness is the great fault of preachers in our day.

"Do you call that a fault," I said once, "or liken over-abundance to starvation?"

"That vine makes most wood which bears least fruit," he replied. "A multitude of words has but little result. Look at the Homilies of the Fathers, how short they mostly are, and how far more useful than our sermons." One of S. Francis' rules for his preaching Order is brevity, giving as a reason that "God's Word is brief." "Believe me," he would say, "I speak from long experience; the more you say, the less people will remember; and the less you say, the more they will profit. Those who load their hearers' memory destroy it, just as you put out a lamp by filling it too full, or kill plants by unmeasured watering. When a discourse is too long, the end makes one forget the middle, and the middle puts out the beginning. Indifferent preachers are bearable if they are brief, but even good preachers become intolerable when they are lengthy. Depend upon it there is no more detestable quality a preacher can possess than tediousness."

§ XVI. *The right length of sermons.*

A little well said and earnestly inculcated is the most effectual kind of preaching. Never heed those fastidious judges who are annoyed by the constant repetition of great truths. "He who would work iron must hammer it over and over again," Francis used to say, "and the painter is never weary of touching up his canvas. How much more patient repetition is needed to impress eternal truth upon dull brains and hearts hardened in sin!"

Francis not only required that preaching should be terse, but that the matter be useful and well chosen; he greatly recommended the study of the Fathers' homilies, which are generally short, containing brief but important instructions. He often quoted the rule: "*Hora integra inepto prædicatori prælonga, idoneo satis longa videtur: tres horæ quadrantes a bonis æstimatoribus horæ integræ præferuntur.*"

§ XVII. *Small congregations.*

"You may rejoice," the Bishop said, "if on going into the pulpit, you see but few people present as a congregation."

"But," I remonstrated, "it is no more trouble to teach a good many than few?"

"My opinion is the result of thirty years' experience," he answered; "I have always found that there were more results for God's service from my sermons to small congregations than to large ones. For instance, when I was Provost, my worthy predecessor used to send me as well as others forth to preach;—well, once on a certain wet Sunday there were but seven people in the church to which I went; whereupon some one suggested that it was not worth the trouble to preach. I replied that a large congregation did not rouse me, nor a small one depress me; provided any one was edified, I asked no more. So I went into the pulpit, and I remember well that I preached on devotion to the Saints, treating the matter very simply, without any special pathos or earnestness. Nevertheless a person in the congregation began to weep and sigh, and at last to sob loudly. Thinking that he was ill, I paused, and offered him any assistance he required. The man answered that he was not ill, and begged me to go on. The sermon was short, and soon came to an end, when he approached

and threw himself at my feet, exclaiming, '*M. le Prévot*, you have saved my soul; you have given me new life; blessed be the hour in which I came to hear you—it will be my blessing through all eternity!' He then told me how the Protestant ministers had persuaded him that we were guilty of idolatry of the saints, and had made him promise to abjure the Catholic Faith, but the sermon he had just heard had dispersed all such doubts, and decided him on remaining faithful to the Church. I cannot tell you what a useful impression this incident made in that part of the country, or how many persons were helped by it to receive the truth. I could tell you many similar facts, which all have tended to make me so greatly prefer small congregations that when I go into a pulpit I am always glad to see few listeners before me."

§ XVIII. *Scolding the absent.*

A certain learned preacher whose sermons cost him a great deal of trouble, but were nevertheless not very well attended, spent the greater part of his time in finding fault with those who neglected to come and hear God's Word preached, going so far as to threaten to give up preaching if so few people came. Francis heard this sermon, and as he left the church he said to a friend, "What does the good man mean? He has been lecturing us for a fault we at any rate could not have committed, for we were present! Did he want us to cut ourselves up so as to fill more places? His scolding will not do much good to the absent people who did not hear it. If he wants to get hold of them he should go out into the streets and highways, and press them to come in to his banquet. As it is he pursues the innocent and lets the guilty escape."

§ XIX. *Incident in Annecy Cathedral.*

A certain monk and lecturer in theology who had a great name in his own country for learning came once to Annecy and expressed a great desire to preach before the Bishop and display his eloquence, hoping to be appointed to some important station for an Advent or Lenten course. The saintly prelate never refused his ear or his pulpit to any orthodox preacher, and he readily consented to this good man's desire. Accordingly, on an appointed day he took his place on his throne in the Cathedral, surrounded by the Chapter and all the clergy and laity in the place, who had been carefully summoned to attend. It pleased God, however, that the worthy ecclesiastic became utterly confused, and after struggling vainly to gather his thoughts, and giving utterance to sundry most incoherent sentences, he came to an abrupt conclusion, and left the church utterly ashamed, a discomfiture which he took to heart so seriously as to become almost deranged. He refused to eat and drink, lost his sleep, and declared that after such a disgrace life was not worth having. His friends requested the Bishop to go and see if he could console such lamentable dejection. Francis (who told me this himself) said that he could not have supposed one of such ascetic habits capable of yielding to such total want of self-control. At last, between coaxing and threats, he induced the poor man to eat, but he could only be quieted by a promise that he should leave not the province only but the country. "Less bodily self-denial and more spiritual would have profited this good religious more," Francis said. "He needed greater interior mortification, and less external austerity."

Another time, speaking of an institution which made great parade of learning, he remarked, "I

could wish they had rather less of the 'knowledge which puffeth up' and more 'charity which edifieth,' rather less good opinion of themselves and more humility."

I remember Cardinal de Bérulle saying of a very learned doctor in theology, who was not wise *in agilibus*, "The best thing to be wished for him is that he might have a little less theology and a little more common sense!"

CHAPTER IV.

ON ECCLESIASTICAL ADMINISTRATION.

§ I. *The first duty of a Bishop is vigilance.*

"THE very word Bishop," Francis used to say to me, "means superintendent and watchman over the house of God. It is your duty to watch over and guard all your diocese, remembering that you will have to give account to the Lord of all pastors for the souls intrusted to you; but above all you are bound to watch over the parish priests and heads of families, who give the tone for good or evil to all our parishes and homes. Our people's lives and belief depend upon the good example of their priests: instruction will do a great deal, but example does far more, since there are but few able to follow the precept our Lord gave with respect to the Scribes and Pharisees, 'All whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do, but do not ye after their works, for they say and do not.' In like manner the happiness of homes depends upon the example set by parents. As episcopal overseer, it appertains to you to keep watch over the heads of your flock, those who, Saul-like, are conspicuous above the rest by their greater height. All that is good flows on from them to their inferiors, even as the precious ointment which flowed down from Aaron's beard to the skirts of his garments. You, the Bishop, are the Curé of curés, and the Father of all heads of the family."

§ II. "*All for love.*"

This was the Bishop's favourite motto, and the mainspring of his rule over men. I have often heard him say that to force the human will is a tyranny displeasing both to God and man. He could not endure the absolutism which insists on obedience, willing or unwilling. "Those who love to be feared fear to be loved," he used to say, "and they are themselves more afraid than any one; for whereas other men fear them only, they are afraid of every one: '*Necesse est multos timeat quem multi timent.*'"

I have frequently heard Francis say, "There are no galley slaves in the royal vessel of Divine Love; every man works his oar voluntarily."

Following this principle, all his orders were given in the shape of persuasion or entreaty, and he delighted in S. Peter's words, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly."[1] In all that concerned spiritual government Francis sought to deal with souls as God and His holy angels deal with them, by means of inspirations, suggestions, illuminations, remonstrances, prayers, entreaty, "in all patience and doctrine." He stood with the Bridegroom at the heart's door, knocking, and gently urging that it might be opened; if successful, he entered joyfully, if entrance was denied, he waited patiently.

I complained once to our dear Father of the opposition I met with in my attempts to do good in my diocese. "How imperious you are!" he exclaimed, "you want to go on the wings of the wind, and your zeal bids fair to carry you over the precipice! Would you be more than God and fetter the wills of those whom He has left free?

[1] 1 Pet. v. 2.

You cut and slash as if the wills of all your diocese were in your hands, but God, Who holds all hearts of men in His, does very differently. He bears with resistance, rebellion against His light, opposition which grieves His Holy Spirit, and those who persist in the hardness of their impenitent hearts gather up for themselves wrath unto the day of vengeance. Nevertheless, He goes on breathing His gentle inspirations, while men reject His leadings, and cry out, 'Be Thou far from us; we will not have Thee to reign over us!' Our guardian angels do the like, and though we may forsake God, they never forsake us. What better rule can you as a Bishop take for yourself?"

§ III. *The Bishop's treatment of erring ecclesiastics.*

A certain ecclesiastic of his diocese having been imprisoned for vicious conduct, the officials begged Francis so earnestly to allow the law to take its course that he controlled his inclination for mercy, and accordingly the priest in question was punished, and on leaving prison he was suspended from all his functions for six months. Far from amending, however, he went on worse than ever, and it ended in his deprivation and banishment from the diocese, although while in confinement he had appeared most humble and submissive and full of professions of penitence. Some years after another clergyman was imprisoned for similar offences, and although he appealed to the Bishop, declaring that he was ready to resign at once should Francis desire it, the officials objected to an interview. , However, Francis desired that the offender might be brought before him, and when the officers objected, he answered, "Well, if you will not bring the man to me, I shall go to him. It is but right to give a sinful brother such consolation. I promise not to set him free without your consent." No sooner did the Bishop

see the poor priest kneeling in tears at his feet, than he raised him compassionately, and with tears in his own eyes, turned to the officials who stood by, saying, "Cannot you see that God has already forgiven this man? Is there any condemnation to those which are in Christ Jesus? If God forgives, who shall condemn him? Not I, most assuredly. Go, brother," he said to the culprit, "go in peace and sin no more. I am sure you are sincerely penitent."

The officers declared that it was all hypocrisy, and referred to the former case. "Perhaps," the saintly Bishop said, "that man would have been really converted if you had dealt more mercifully with him. Take heed lest hereafter you be called to give account for his soul. I will be surety for this man; I believe him to be sincere in his repentance, and if he is deceiving me, it will be more to his damage than mine." The culprit, weeping bitterly, expressed his readiness to undergo any punishment imposed, none of which could equal his mental suffering, and he offered to resign his benefice immediately if the Bishop wished it. "On the contrary, I should be very sorry that you did so," Francis replied. "I expect the tower which has damaged the Church by its fall to be an ornament and stay thereto when rebuilt." So the prisoner was set free, and after a month's suspension *a divinis*, he resumed his office, and amply fulfilled the Bishop's prophecy that he would henceforth be a dutiful son of the Church. One day these two cases were alluded to in Francis' presence, when he observed, "It is always better to make penitents by indulgence, than hypocrites by severity."

§ IV. *The power of gentleness.*

It was necessary once to imprison a priest who had given great scandal by his evil life, but after a few days he professed deep penitence, and requested

to see the Bishop, who had already forgiven him more than once. Dreading his indulgence, the prison officials refused at first, but at last the priest prevailed, and throwing himself at Francis de Sales' feet, he entreated for mercy, protesting before God that he would lead a new life, and that where sin had abounded grace should much more abound. In his turn the holy Bishop knelt before his guilty priest, and added to his utter confusion by exclaiming with tears, "I, on my side, implore you by the bowels of mercy of Christ Jesus, in Whom we both trust, that you will take pity upon me, and upon all your brethren in this diocese, as indeed upon the Church and religion generally, which you have so grievously injured by your scandalous life, which has hitherto caused the enemy to blaspheme. I beseech you, have pity on your own soul, which you are perilling; I exhort you in the Name of Jesus Christ turn to God by hearty repentance; I implore you by all that is holy in Heaven and earth, by that Precious Blood which you are treading under foot, by the Goodness of that Dear Lord Whom you crucify afresh, by the Holy Spirit Whom you are grieving, turn to Him."

§ V. *Conversion of a sinful priest.*

Once during a visitation, a certain priest was reported to the Bishop as leading a very scandalous life, who nevertheless appeared unabashed before him, denying all that was said as mere slander. The Saint received him with his usual kindness, but on perceiving his obstinate effrontery, he could not restrain his own shame, and his own cheeks reddened as he spoke to the unblushing culprit. There was something in this silent rebuke which touched the sinner's heart, and anxious to seek relief through confession, he asked the Bishop to receive him in the tribunal of penance. That venerable man's ear

and heart were at once open to him, and he came forth from the confessional like Naaman from the waters of Jordan, filled with "the shame which is glory and grace."[1] Before departing, he could not refrain from exclaiming, "Well, Monseigneur, what must you think of the greatest sinner among men?"

"I think, brother," Francis answered, "that God has shed forth the abundance of His Grace upon you; you shine with all its unutterable brightness in my eyes."

"But," the priest returned, "you know what I am."

"I have said what you are," the Saint replied.

"Well then, what I have been!"

"As to that," Francis answered, "I have already forgotten it; why should I remember what God has put away? Do you take me for that Pharisee who could only recollect what the Magdalene had been, when he saw her weeping at her Saviour's Feet? But, to prove that I believe you to be full now of heavenly grace," he pursued, "I ask of you to impart some thereof to me, and to give me your blessing." And so saying, he knelt at his penitent's feet. The priest, utterly abashed, would have refused, but Francis obliged him to exercise his office, and in his turn to hear his Bishop's confession, to his infinite amazement and edification. Anxious to let the world know that the priest was really restored to his good opinion, Francis took several future opportunities of going publicly to him as a confessor, while those without knew not which most to admire, the considerate humility of the Bishop or the almost miraculous change in the priest.

§ VI. *Competition for benefices.*

Francis established this as the rule of his diocese, and he has often told me that but for it the responsibility of appointments would be intolerable.

[1] Ecclus. iv. 21.

In order to put an end to all intrigue and favouritism, and to bind his own hands, he constituted a council of some of the most learned and pious doctors and theologians in the diocese, to select the best among those who presented themselves as candidates for any cure, he himself acting as president, but only giving his vote like the rest.

§ VII. *Difficulties of administration.*

One of the Bishop's favourite sayings was that reason does not deceive us, but reasoning often does.

When any matter of business, whether complaint or difficulty, was brought before him, he always listened attentively and patiently to all that was to be said on the subject, and his admirable judgment was well able duly to weigh the whole. If people persisted in plausible but unsubstantial argument, he would sometimes say pleasantly, "I see what you mean by your reasons, but don't you know that all reasons are not reasonable?"

Some one answered once that you might as well say that heat was not hot. "Reason and reasoning are very different matters," he replied, "reasoning is merely the means whereby we attain to reason." And how gently and patiently he would try to bring back those who were in error to that truth which is synonymous with reason. True reason is not easily found by those who adhere obstinately to their own judgment, but docile tractable minds—*quis sapiens et intelliget hæc*—these know the way. It requires a certain strength of mind to discover one's own weakness, and it is a sign of no ordinary wisdom to be ready freely to yield to a superior judgment.

§ VIII. *The Bishop's firmness.*

An eminent man applied to the Saint to grant

him a monition, but not considering the case to be a just one, Francis strove by gentleness and reason to persuade him to desist from the requisition. The layman was piqued at his refusal, and complained loudly of injustice, to which the Bishop merely replied that he was grieved not to be able conscientiously to do what was asked of him. "My friendship," he said, "goes as far as the altar—as far as God's honour and my own conscience will allow. Ask what is just, and your demand shall be heard."

In his indignation the complainant appealed to the Senate at Chambery, and obtained a power to seize the monition. When he announced this to the Bishop it was received as a tall cliff receives the waves which dash around it. Francis merely replied that he had a soul to save, and a conscience to obey; he was ready to answer for his refusal. The matter went so far that his temporalities were on the point of being seized. When the storm had passed by, Francis said quietly, in speaking of it, "If they had seized my temporalities they would have done the best thing that could happen to me, for then I should have been altogether spiritual, and it is written, 'He that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.'"[1] Another time, alluding to the same matter, he said to me that it was a great pity his opponents had not seized his temporal goods; God would assuredly have restored them tenfold. "Do you think my people would have let me starve?" he asked. "I am sure that my only difficulty would have been how to refuse help."

§ IX. *Obedience to secular powers.*

At one time the Duke of Savoy was so much pressed by urgent public necessities, as well as by

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 15.

the exigencies of war, that he obtained a brief from Rome for levying a tax upon Church property, which accordingly he sent to the different Bishops that they might raise the money in proportion to each benefice. The Bishop of Geneva called all those in his diocese who were subject to the demand together, but found them ill disposed to comply, and ready with a variety of excuses which he thought trivial as compared with their sovereign's and their country's need. Francis made a vigorous appeal to their loyalty, comparing their indifference and selfishness with those of whom S. Paul says, "Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in Heaven a better and an enduring substance."[1] He urged the obligation of all men, and specially the clergy, to lend their means as well as their prayers for the defence of the country, and following up words by deeds, the Bishop taxed himself so liberally as to shame those who had been recalcitrant. Gideon-like, Francis de Sales might say to his spiritual army, "Look on me, and do likewise."[2] He who taught obedience was ever foremost to obey, and his actions always corresponded to his words.

§ X. *A Bishop's responsibility in temporal matters.*

Once in the course of conversation I acknowledged that I paid very little attention to the temporalities of my Bishopric, trusting them entirely to my stewards; adding that I feared this negligence might be wrong, inasmuch as one must give account to God for one's possessions, while nevertheless I really did not understand anything about such matters.

"As for me," Francis replied, "I leave the whole management of my revenues to my steward, and trust him a great deal more than I should trust

[1] Heb. x. 34. [2] Judges vii. 17.

myself, not merely because I have perfect confidence in him, but because he is a far better economist than I am; indeed, I should be the ruin of my whole household if I were to meddle."

"But is there not some difference," I asked, "between one's own patrimony and one's episcopal revenue? One can give or lose the first as one pleases, but it seems to me another matter to waste the other. I should not easily be induced to go to law, for instance, about secular property, but I would not yield an inch in what is ecclesiastical, and therefore belongs solely to God."

Francis smiled: "Then you consider your hereditary property as belonging less to God than your Church revenues? Have you forgotten the Psalm, *Domini est terra?* And do you think that you have any right to squander your own property, or that you will not have to give account to God for it? You remind me of a certain great man who was very rich and very niggardly, although he had no children for whom to save. His brother was an Archbishop, and of a precisely opposite disposition, spending so freely that he had many debts, and sometimes scarce wherewithal to keep the pot boiling. Some one observed to the nobleman that his brother lived like a prince and spent his money with both hands. 'Like enough,' was the answer; 'he only holds his property for his life.' Whereupon the gentleman who had made the remark turned upon him abruptly and asked, 'Pray, my lord, for how many lives do you hold your marquisate?' Apparently that worthy nobleman differed from you, and thought that Church property may be squandered at will, but that a man's patrimony is sacred! I should say that both alike should be handled as belonging to God, Who has given them to us to dispense, not to disperse. The real thing that concerns us is to be faithful in either trust."

"Never mind patrimony," I said; "I want to talk about Church property, which is what troubles me. Would you not go to law in defence of your episcopal revenues?"

"Unquestionably," he answered; "I would sell the paten to defend the chalice!"

"Would you plead personally?"

"Yes, if it were really necessary; but as I receive the revenues through a *procureur*, I might just as well plead through a solicitor. Nevertheless I should speak and write, and leave no stone unturned in the defence of my crozier."

"Then how about the Evangelic precept, 'If any man will take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also?'"

"Don't you see," Francis replied, "that this applies to one's own cloak, whereas we are talking about property which is not yours but the Church's, as far as capital goes. As for the immediate revenues, I should not trouble about those. The more a man shaves the thicker his beard will be, and drawing water never dried up a well. But if your wells are stopped up, as the men of Gera stopped Abraham's wells,[1] then it is time to defend yourself, because you are pledged to preserve and defend that which is to last beyond your time." I remember that Francis quoted S. Bernard on this subject, as saying that good Bishops manage their temporalities by the hands of stewards, and tend their spiritualities themselves; whereas evil Bishops take great personal pains with their worldly revenues, and turn over their spiritual responsibilities to their Vicars General, their Archdeacons, and others, without caring much how they are discharged. If Bishops may lawfully entrust a part of their spiritual charge to their subordinate clergy, far more reasonably they may commit the charge of their property to faithful administrators,

[1] Gen. xxvi. 15.

in order to give themselves to prayer, study, the ministry of the Word and Sacraments, and other episcopal functions. A Bishop may well say as the king of Sodom said to Abraham, "Give me the persons and take the goods to thyself."[1] "Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?"[2]

§ XI. *Dispensations.*

The officers of a garrison in my diocese applied for leave on their men's behalf to eat eggs and cheese in Lent. I was perplexed, being wont only to grant such dispensations to the sick, the rather as in this country Lent is so strictly observed that the peasants are scandalized at butter being allowed.

In my doubt what to do, I sent a messenger to consult my dear friend at Annecy (no uncommon circumstance). He answered, "I revere the faith and piety of these good centurions, and their request is worthy to be had in remembrance. It is edifying not to the synagogue only, but to the whole Church. As to the reply, I should not merely grant their request, but I should give them leave to eat not only eggs but beef, not cheese only, but the cows which gave the milk which made it! Joking apart," he continued, "I cannot think what you mean by consulting me as to what soldiers may eat in Lent, as if the laws of war and necessity did not prevail over all other law! God grant that these good fellows may never do anything worse than eat eggs or beef, cheese or cows! We should not hear so many complaints as we do if such were the case!"

§ XII. *Strictness.*

I was continually wearying the Bishop of Geneva

[1] Gen. xiv. 21. [2] Matt. vi. 25.

with consultations about permissions and dispensations—a matter in which he thought me far too strict. "You perpetually consult me about other people," he said at last, "but what do you do yourself under similar circumstances?"

"I act according to the dictates of my conscience," I replied, "or I call in the help of my ordinary confessor."

"Well, then, why cannot you do the same for other people?"

"You see neither my confessor nor I are the Bishop of Geneva!"

"It is all very well," Francis answered, "but mind what I say, some day you will consult that same Bishop on your own behalf, and you will not be so ready to believe him then as you are now in what concerns others."

I protested against this, affirming that I should be still more ready to submit to him in what touched myself than in other matters. "S. Peter said much the same," Francis replied, "and you know how he kept his word. Be sure that when you begin to grow more indulgent to others, you will become more strict with yourself. Generally those who are very easy with themselves are apt to deal severely with other men. When that day comes you will begin a fresh series of consultations with the Bishop of Geneva, and he, poor man, will be a sort of Cassandra; he will tell the truth, and will not be believed!"

Of a truth my dear Father was "high priest that year and prophesied," for it all came to pass precisely as he had foretold.

§ XIII. *A refusal.*

An individual having proffered an unlawful request, Francis set forth with the utmost patience and gentleness his reasons for refusing what was

unjust, but failing to make the man in question see reason, the Bishop (who was immoveable in all matters of right and wrong) at length was obliged to give him a flat refusal, saying that the thing was impossible. The gentleman forgot himself so far as to reply, "It is not impossible for want of means, for you could do it, if you would ; it is want of good-will to me."

"A right-minded man feels his power limited by that which is lawful," Francis answered, "and to him whatever is forbidden becomes impossible."

The man talked of retaliation, but Francis replied, "If I were hereafter to ask anything wrong of you, you would do me a kindness by refusing : if what I may ask should be right, you are too just to refuse." In his anger the gentleman declared that he would refuse anything whatever to the Bishop. "You are not really so indifferent to your soul's welfare as to act thus," Francis replied. "For my part, I confess that poor and weak as I am, I aim at a heavenly inheritance, and I cannot bring myself to sell my birthright for a mess of pottage."

CHAPTER V.

COUNSELS AS TO THE GUIDANCE OF COMMUNITIES.

§ I. *The Bishop's opinion of monasteries.*

"SHALL I tell you what a monastery is?" he asked. "It is a school of precise training, wherein every soul must learn to let itself be dealt with, shaped, and polished, until it is meet to be built up in the Will of God. The most sure sign of perfection is a willingness to receive correction, which can only spring from humility, whereby we learn that we stand in need of amendment.

"Again, a monastery is a hospital for the spiritual sick who seek healing, and who to obtain it are willing to endure the lancet, the knife, cauterisation, and every other painful remedy. In olden days religious were called by a name which meant 'healers' (*guérisseurs*). Be you all this, my daughter, and take no heed of whatsoever self-love may say to the contrary; resolve firmly, heartily, and lovingly to say, 'I will be healed or die; as I would not die eternally I must be healed, and to be healed I must bear pain and correction; therefore, I will entreat my physicians not to spare me with their healing remedies.'"

§ II. *The active and contemplative life.*

Some people question whether it is not inevitable that those Sisters whose vocation devotes them to an active life of toil and hardship must be more acceptable to God than such as lead a contemplative

life, which is so quiet and easy? My answer is that if when we speak of "meritorious," we mean the comparative abstract excellence of the two ways of life, there is no doubt but that the contemplative life is nobler and more excellent than the active life; and that from our Lord's own judgment as pronounced upon Martha and Mary, the latter having, as He said, "chosen the better part."

Our highest perfection and happiness consist in union with God, and assuredly contemplation unites us to Him more closely than action does; although amid the existing and often urgent necessities of this life action possesses some great advantages over contemplation. But if by "merit" we mean that which wins an eternal reward, we must take charity largely into account, and grant that those whose action or contemplation has been most full of love will have most merit, and consequently the highest recompense in Heaven. "Let Martha be active without hindering Mary," the Bishop used to say; "let Mary contemplate without despising Martha; for our Lord will take the part of whichever is blamed. Nevertheless that which is of grace should not be weighed by natural measures, nor that which is of nature by the standard of grace. Earth is not further from heaven than the supernatural ways of God from our earthly ways."

§ III. *Advantages of solitude.*

We chanced once to visit a Carthusian monk, who was as remarkable for his piety as for the exquisite beauty of his mind, and found inscribed on his cell these lines taken from an ancient writer:—

> "Tu mihi curarum requies, tu nocte vel atra
> Lumen, et in solis tu mihi turba locis."
> TIBULLUS, IV. Eleg. xiii. 12, 13.

which may be rendered thus:—

"My Refuge Thou, when cares and griefs intrude,
My Light in darkness, Friend in Solitude."[1]

We fell into conversation concerning these beautiful lines, Francis observing that God is the Sole Rest of those who forsake the world and its cares in order to hear His Voice within the silence of their hearts; without which devout listening, he said, solitude would be a very weariness, an endless martyrdom, rather than a peaceful rest. But those who have Martha's cares upon them may enjoy a most perfect share in Mary's rest, if they refer everything to God.

On another cell we found the inscription, "*Hæc requies mea in seculum seculi; hic habitabo quoniam elegi eam.*"[2]

"One must choose God as one's dwelling-place rather than a cell," Francis remarked, "if one would

[1] M. de Belley translated these lines from Tibullus as follows:

"Vous êtes mon repos dans les soins les plus rudes;
Dans la plus sombre nuit vous m'êtes un beau jour;
Et je suis avec vous, au fond des solitudes,
Moins seul qu'au milieu de la Cour."

The Rev. Isaac Williams quotes the same passage and paraphrases it in the "Mountain Home." His words are too beautiful to bear curtailing:

"Spirit of peace,
O let me rest beneath Thy palmy shade,
And trace in Thy clear fountain, calm and deep,
Shadows of happier things, and the pure Heaven;
Mirror of deep tranquillity, beyond
The sweep of scorching winds and wintry cold!
Or if not to that haven of Thy rest,
Yet let Thy cheering beam, through the dark wild,
Fall gently on my lonely path! and oh!
When all around is dreariness and night,
Let me not call it solitude, if Thou,
Light of the soul, be near! And if the storms
Gather around me, and the water-floods
Roll o'er my soul, oh! let no envious clouds
Hide from mine eyes that solitary star,
Rising in loveliness beyond the storm!
Oh! o'er the howling wilderness of waves,
Let not Faith fail to bear me up! Be Thou
My Guardian, Thou my Guide!"

[2] "This shall be my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have a delight therein."—Psalm cxxxii. 15.

dwell therein for ever. Thrice blessed they who dwell in that house which is not merely God's House but God Himself; they shall praise Him for ever."

Over another cell was written, "*Unam petii a Domino, hanc requiram, ut inhabitem in domo Domini omnibus diebus vitæ meæ; ut videam voluptatem Domini, et visitem templum ejus.*"[1] "That house of the Lord," Francis said, "is His Temple."

Returning to the Latin verses, he repeated the words, "*Tu nocte vel atra lumen*," saying, "When Jesus was born at Bethlehem He brought a bright light into the darkness of night, and His Incarnation gave light to them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death. He is our Light and our Salvation; though we walk in the midst of the shadow of death, we need fear no evil if He is beside us. He is the Light of the world; He dwelleth in inaccessible light, which no darkness can reach." He went on, "*Et in solis Tu mihi turba locis.*" "Oh yes!" Francis exclaimed, "intercourse with God in solitude is far better than the teeming crowds of this world, amid their restless cares, their endless weariness, their ceaseless importunity. What a wretched thing earthly grandeur is, so hard to win, so hard to keep, so bemoaned when lost!"

The Bishop was fond of saying that one should be able to find pleasure in oneself when alone, and in one's neighbour when in society; all our real delight in either being found in God, Who equally gives us solitude or society. He who cannot do this will be weary everywhere, for solitude without God is a living death, and society without Him is more to be dreaded than desired. Where God

[1] "One thing have I required of the Lord, which I will require; even that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to visit His Temple." —Psalm xxvii. 4.

is all is well; where He is not nothing can prosper.

§ IV. *The trials of solitude.*

Some one spoke of the sanctity and innocence of a solitary life. Francis answered that it has its difficulties as well as life in the world. Society is good and bad, and so too there is a good and an evil solitude. Good, when we are drawn thereto by God, as He says by His prophet Hosea, "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her:"[1] evil to those who are weak and self-trusting, as it is written, "Woe to him that is alone when he falleth, for he hath not another to help him up."[2] If mere external solitude made a man holy and innocent, there would be no great difficulty in attaining sanctity.

It was observed that solitude afforded fewer temptations, and consequently fewer occasions of sin. "There are evil spirits ready to tempt us in the desert as well as in the city," Francis replied. "Unless grace be at hand to guard a man, he will fall everywhere. Lot, who preserved his holiness while living in a corrupt city, fell when in his mountain solitude. Man carries self about with him everywhere, and infirmity is fast bound up in his soul."

Many deceived themselves by fancying that they have attained a virtue if they are not conscious of yielding to its opposing vice; but there is a wide difference between being free from a vice and practising the corresponding virtue. No doubt, to be free from folly is a step towards acquiring wisdom, but it is a mere step, and does not in itself constitute wisdom. To abstain from evil is not the same thing as to do good, although all such abstinence is good in itself—it is, so to say, a foundation on which the

[1] Hos. ii. 14. [2] Eccles. iv. 10.

building may be raised. Virtue lies less in theory than in practice: theoretical goodness is passive, though it prepares a man to do that which is right, but it is worth little, unless reduced to action.

"How is he to learn obedience who is subject to no rule? or patience, if no one contradicts him? or endurance without suffering, or humility where he is inferior to none, or friendship if he shuns the society of men, and is thrown back upon himself?"

There are sundry virtues to which solitude gives no scope, to wit, mercy; concerning the exercise of which we shall one day be examined closely; God having said, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

§ V. *The spirit of a religious life.*

A Sister once asked Francis what means should be taken to maintain the true spirit of the Visitation, and prevent it from fading away? He replied, "The only way is to keep it carefully shut up and inclosed in faithful observance." "I hear," he said another time, "that some of our Sisters are so jealous of the spirit of their institution as to be unwilling to impart it to any one without. But this excessive jealousy must be put away. What right have you to hide away anything from your neighbours which might profit them? I quite differ from this opinion, and I would rather have everything that is good in the Visitation made known to all men; indeed, I have always thought that it would be well to print our rules and constitutions, so that others might derive what good they can therefrom. Would to God that many souls might be found willing to follow them; we should see many a great conversion to God's Glory and their own salvation. By all means be most watchful in preserving the spirit of the Visitation, but not so as to hinder you from imparting whatever can help your neighbours in all charity

and simple-heartedness. Do not fear to lose anything by so doing; charity never hinders us; it rather forwards perfection everywhere."

§ VI. *The weak to be cared for.*

"Who is weak, and I am not weak?" the great Apostle asks; and assuredly our dear Father possessed no common share of that apostolic mind, so special was his tenderness for those who are weak in body or spirit. He used to say that most religious houses were too particular as to the corporal and spiritual infirmities of probationers, forgetting that convents are as hospitals where the sick in body or mind should be healed. Doubtless, just as there are certain infectious maladies of the body which require isolation, so there are spiritual infirmities, such as incompatibility and incorrigibility, which are valid reasons for refusing to profess a probationer. "I always take the part of those who are weak," Francis writes; "and I fear lest our houses should give overmuch weight to the inconvenience they cause, and so try to get rid of such persons, without a due regard to charity. Consequently I take the side of the invalid" (about whom he was consulted), "provided always that she is humble and grateful for the charity shown her. It will be a constant means of exercising the Sisters' holy patience."

§ VII. *Fitness for the religious life.*

Francis was told that a certain young man who was leading a profligate life talked of entering the cloister. He remarked, "The road he is taking now seems more likely to lead him to the hospital." It was said further that this youth openly professed his intention of using the cloister as a *pis-aller*, when he was ruined; and that he said he should

imitate Solomon, who "withheld not his heart from any joy" before turning away from the vanities of this world.[1] "He has not taken a very safe patron saint," Francis observed, "for we know nothing certainly about King Solomon's end."

The wretched youth did as he said, and sought refuge in a convent, but he was almost immediately dismissed, and shortly after sent to prison by his creditors.

When Francis was told of this, he said, "I did not think he was on the right road for the cloister; he loved the world too well to reject it so absolutely. Men seldom cultivate a friendship they are about to reject, and it was an insult to the Spirit of Grace to talk of the religious life while leading one so reprobate. It was not the Lord Who led him into the wilderness, and consequently, like rebellious Adam, he has been driven out of the land of rest."

Francis went on to say, "If this poor fellow could but come to a better mind, he might find grace in a prison no less than in a cloister. Remember how the holy Pietro Celestius comforted himself when thrown into prison by his successor Pope Boniface VIII. 'Pietro,' he said to himself, 'now thou hast that which thou so greatly desired—solitude, silence, retreat, a cell, inclosure, darkness. Therefore, while in thy narrow yet blessed prison, bless thou the Lord that He hath given thee the desire of thy heart, although not in the way thou didst seek it, yet surely more desirable in His Eyes. God would have thee serve Him after His fashion, not after thine own. What wilt thou in Heaven or earth save His Holy Will? O blessed Cross! so long desired, now at length attained; I clasp thee to my breast. Do thou receive the disciple of Him Who through thee hath saved me!'"

When Francis heard of youths who while purposing to enter upon the religious life yet took their

[1] Eccles. ii. 10.

fill of the world's pleasures before leaving it, he was more than suspicious of their vocation. In truth such men very rarely come to be professed, after making such bad use of any drawings they may have felt for the cloister. Some one applied the proverb to them, "*Reculer pour mieux sauter;*" —"They may go so far back as to lose all their strength before they jump," the Bishop replied. But when he saw any one steadily and deliberately preparing to leave the world, patient, devout, stedfast in prayer, fasting, and communion, he would say, "This man is in earnest; it is no play to him, or if he is playing, it is a safe game in which he is sure to win. He will not look back like Lot's wife, or like the Israelites who regretted the leeks and fleshpots of Egypt!"

§ VIII. *Reform.*

The Bishop of Geneva was repeatedly called upon to undertake the reformation of religious houses. His system was invariably to go quietly to work, carrying out his favourite maxim, "Make haste slowly." He always aimed at a little well done, and although grace should not be met with slackness or delay, injudicious zeal he counted to be simply dangerous, accomplishing nothing, because it seeks to do everything at once. His favourite saying was "*Pedetentim.*" He always strove to gain ground, step by step, constantly citing Solomon's words, "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."[1] "Real progress," he said, "is ever moving on imperceptibly. God Himself, to Whom time is not, yet brings His works to perfection by such gradual and gentle ways as are well-nigh imperceptible."

Francis did not agree with those who begin to reform from without, and spend so much time upon

[1] Prov. iv. 18.

the husk that they suffer the kernel to wither meanwhile. Such reformation is apt to prove a delusion. In the reformation of an order of men, Francis laid most stress on mental prayer, and its inseparable companions, spiritual reading and the frequent use of the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist. With the help of these, he used to say, everything will be accomplished, without noise, or effort, or opposition—insensibly and gently. When the house to be reformed was of women, he required two things, one bodily, the other spiritual, namely, obedience to the Council of Trent as to inclosure, which he considered necessary to their good repute ; and the practice of mental prayer for half an hour twice daily. With this help, he said, it is easy to bring women to dutiful and faithful observance of rule.

As to austerities and bodily mortifications, he laid little or no stress upon them ; enjoining no fasts save those appointed by the Church, any more than abstinence from meat, bare feet, dispensing with linen, night watching, or any other similar acts of self-denial, which are good in themselves, but only reach the external life.

Francis was consulted once as to the propriety of going barefoot as was proposed in a certain religious house. "For goodness' sake," he exclaimed, "let them keep their shoes. It is their heads you must try to reform, not their feet!"

§ IX. *The value of labour.*

Francis used greatly to long for a congregation of women who should have no provision or dowry save their own willing labour, and whose choir should be their workroom, where they might realise the promise, "Thou shalt eat the labours of thine hands : O well is thee, and happy shalt thou be."[1] "What a great thing it would be," he used to say

[1] Psalm cxxviii. 2.

"to eat one's bread in the sweat of one's brow, and to be able to say with S. Paul, 'These hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.'"[1] Such poverty is worth more in God's Sight than all the treasures of this world; it is true evangelic poverty, such as our Dear Lord practised, and following His Example, the Blessed Virgin, S. Joseph, and the Apostles, who all lived by spiritual or bodily labour. "Among all orders of women," Francis said, "I must confess that I prefer the Hospitalières, the Ursulines, and the Congrégation de Notre Dame, who teach little children, because they all really live by the labour of their hands: not but that I value other orders who have endowments, and who work more to avoid idleness than to gain their bread; but both I and others have often wondered that many of these foundations do not make it easier for poor Sisters to join them, whereas, practically, the richer a convent is the larger dowry those who seek to enter must bring. This is a kind of poverty only attainable to the rich! Middle class people find it easier to establish their children in the world, and the really poor cannot think of such houses. What becomes of all the money? It is used for buildings, we are told, but it seems to me that these buildings are for ever going on!

Francis hoped when his own order was established that women might be received entirely without payment, and he advocated work not merely to avoid idleness (as is incumbent on all, rich or poor), but as a means of livelihood. This is expressed in his Constitutions, and in a letter he says, "We are bound to lead a life of toil, inasmuch as we are the offspring of our Dear Lord's labours and death."

[1] Acts xx. 34.

§ X. *The Order of the Visitation.*

In the course of conversation concerning this order, he was once asked, "What do you mean to do with this congregation of women? of what use will they be to God's Church? Are there not already orders which all your Sisters might just as well join? Surely it would have been better if you were to found an order of men? The time which you devote to teaching these women, who have to be told the same thing a hundred times over before they remember it, would be far better spent in training ecclesiastics. It is a mere hidden treasure, a light under a bushel; mere painting on water, or writing on sand!"

To all this our dear Father only answered with his pleasant smile, patiently remarking, "Such great works are not for such as me. I leave gold and silver to be manipulated by jewellers, and confine myself, like a potter, to clay. Believe me, God is a great worker, and He knows how to do great things with the poorest tools. He constantly chooses the weak to confound them that are wise. He defeats knowledge by means of ignorance, and that which seems as nought triumphs over the strong. Remember Moses' rod, the jawbone in Samson's hand, and Holofernes conquered by a woman. When God created the world, it was from out of blank space, and you must admit that mighty flames may rise from a tiny spark. When the Jews returned from captivity the altar fire was restored to them from a mere muddy pit.[1]

"The weaker sex needs more care and compassion than men who are stronger. S. Bernard says that the charge of souls is chiefly with respect to the weak; and our Lord Himself did not refuse His ministrations to women. He was habitually followed

[1] 2 Macc. i. 19, 20.

by them, and they were found beside His Cross when all the disciples, save the beloved S. John, had forsaken Him. The Church does not despise her devout daughters, nor the good example they spread abroad, whithersoever God pleases to call them. Do you count it a small thing to be a sweet-smelling savour in Jesus Christ—a savour of life unto life? Of the two gifts we seek in all pastors, that of teaching by word and by example, which do you hold to be most precious? For my part, I prize an ounce of good example more than a hundredweight of empty words! Learning without a holy life is a mere scandal, a bell which calls to prayers indeed, but never prays itself. Hence the reproach, 'Physician, heal thyself.' It is true that there are many other congregations which my Sisters might enter, but some of them would not be received because of their age or infirmities, which render them incapable of bodily austerity. We receive the stronger members of our Order, that they may minister to those who are weak, and thus we hope to obey the precept, 'Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.' As to what you say about founding an order for training ecclesiastics, that is being done by that faithful servant of God, M. de Bérulle, who is much fitter for such a work than I am, and who also has more leisure for it than I, with my large and anxious diocese. I am disposed to leave great undertakings to great men. God will prosper our humble beginnings as He sees best."

§ XI. *Madame de Chantal.*

In the early days of the Congregation that excellent lady, who had been chosen by Francis as the corner-stone of his work, fell so ill that her life was despaired of. Francis heard the tidings with his usual calmness and resignation, and although

aware that if Madame de Chantal died the work would probably be broken up, he only said, "God will accept our good intentions; He knows our weakness, and that we are incompetent for so great an undertaking." But almost immediately after this total submission, God raised up Madame de Chantal, and she has survived for twenty-eight years, bringing the work of the Visitation to the point it has actually attained.

"Sometimes it is God's Will," Francis used to say, "for one man to begin, and another to finish. David gathered the materials for the Temple, which it was Solomon's lot to build. S. Francis, S. Dominic, and S. Ignatius longed for martyrdom, but God withheld it, accepting the will. It is no small proof of resignation to lie simply and patiently in God's Hands when our undertakings for His Glory fail and come to naught."

§ XII. *The Founder of the Visitation.*

"I don't know," the Bishop said to me, "why everybody should call me the founder of the Visitation. I am a pretty sort of man to be a founder, and start a new Order, as though there were not plenty already! In fact, I have done what I wanted to undo, and undone what I meant to accomplish!"

"I do not understand you," I replied.

"I mean that all I intended was to establish a single house at Annecy for women, widowed or others, without inclosure or vows, whose work should be visiting the poor and destitute, and all such works of mercy, spiritual or corporal, as appertain thereto. And now we have a regular inclosed Order, following the rule of S. Augustine, a thing altogether incompatible with my first scheme, according to which the Sisters lived for some years. Indeed, the name of Visitation has become quite

inapplicable to them, and I am rather a sort of godfather than founder."

This change was mainly brought about by the Archbishop of Lyons. Francis de Sales always spoke with great admiration of the celebrated Andalusian preacher Avila, who, after organizing a congregation of secular priests, gave up his undertaking readily when he found that the foundation of the Jesuits rendered his work unnecessary. S. Ignatius himself, whose heart was so greatly in his congregation that he owned nothing would grieve him so sorely as to see it come to nothing, yet said that if such were to be the case, he should be consoled after an hour of prayer. So Francis faced the possibility of failure in his new work, saying, "God will accept our goodwill, as He accepted that of Abraham. The Lord gave us a goodly promise: if He should take it away, blessed be the Name of the Lord."

§ XIII. *Difficulty of finding good Superiors.*

Francis de Sales lived twelve years after the foundation of the Congregation of S. Mary; during which time he only established twelve branches, refusing three times as many, and continually reiterating his favourite maxim, "Little but well."[1] He was always afraid of committing the charge of a house to an inefficient Superior, knowing that the head influences all the body for good or evil. He was perpetually urged to found fresh houses, but in truth he was so well armed with reasons for refusing that I found it very difficult to obtain a little colony at Belley. Francis used often to say, "They are but beginning in the good way; we must give them time to grow settled. Let us be patient, and the little we can achieve will be enough, if it is accepted of our Lord and Master. I would rather see the

[1] "Peu et bien."

roots grow in holiness than the branches in an increase of houses. They will be none the nearer perfection for having a number of monasteries. I think it is by extending too rapidly that so many orders have grown lax. It is harder than people are apt to suppose to find good Superiors. Men talk as if they could be sent forth into the world like the Apostles, but pray, are they confirmed and filled with God's Grace, as the Apostles were? Too often while meaning to build we pull down; and instead of promoting God's Glory we tarnish it." He used, when speaking of this subject, to quote the text, "Thou hast multiplied the nation and not increased the joy."[1]

Of course the excuse for all these attempts to extend the Order is God's Glory, and the greater facility of leading souls to glorify Him; but I am not sure that is always the genuine reason, or that self-love does not often creep in.

§ XIV. *Community life.*

Francis had a great idea of the blessing of a simple, common life, nor would he permit the Sisters of the Visitation to practise any extraordinary austerities as to fasting, clothing, or sleep; regulating all such matters by the laws which are common to all who seek to lead a Christian life in the world. In this way he considered that he could best teach his spiritual daughters to follow the Example of Jesus Christ, His Holy Mother, and His Apostles; always leaving latitude to their spiritual guides as to any extraordinary mortifications which might be beneficial to individual character or requirements. Not that Francis undervalued bodily austerities, but he thought that they needed to be judiciously used, so as to be a means of controlling the flesh, without damaging health. In brief, he preferred

[1] Isa. ix. 3.

following the life of our Lord to that of S. John the Baptist.

§ XV. *A dying Religious.*

A Sister of the Visitation, whose patience through prolonged suffering had been a subject of general edification, was dying. Two hours before she expired, Francis was summoned to her aid. He had known her soul intimately for long, as also how tenderly she had been led along the *via Crucis* by her Loving Master, and it would have been an unreality to talk to her of resigning herself to die, when only her entire submission to God's Will had resigned her to live. The last agony was approaching; she had made all the acts of faith, love, contrition, humility, trust, resignation, and conformity to the Will of God, which were suggested by her spiritual father after his usual quiet fashion, leaving intervals for the weary soul to rest in. At last her pain becoming intense, she sighed forth, "*Mon père*, would it not be wrong . . . .?" and there she stopped.

Supposing that in this last hour the Evil One was tempting her, Francis hastened to say, "What would be wrong, my child?"

"No, *mon cher père*, it would be too untrusting . . . . ;" and she paused again.

Really fearing for her, the Bishop asked, "What is it, my daughter? Surely the confidence you have so long placed in me does not fail you now? Tell me what it is that troubles you? I fear my own sins are the cause of this!"

"Far from it, *mon père*," the dying nun said; "I have more confidence than ever in your love. But it is not worth troubling you for this."

"Perhaps," Francis replied, "it may be of more importance than you think. The spiritual malice of the tempter is very subtle, especially when his

hour is nearly gone for ever. I entreat, I conjure you not to hide from me what it is that troubles you."

"Alas, *mon bon père*," she answered, "it were too great unfaithfulness to our Dear Lord; now, if ever, I ought to submit my will to His."

"My daughter," her confessor said, "you cannot give a better proof of submission to Him than in telling me honestly and simply what it is which thus distresses you."

"*Mon père*, I have borne so much that surely now I ought to be able to stifle all self-indulgence and murmurs."

"Nothing is too trifling for obedience," Francis said. "I do not like to command you in our Dear Lord's Name to speak, but I entreat you, my child, to relieve the anxiety I feel. My daughter, will you oblige me to use extreme measures to banish the evil spirit which thus keeps you silent?"

At length with a feeble voice the dying Sister whispered, "*Mon père*, if you bid me speak in virtue of obedience; though it seems fainthearted to complain now at this late hour; but oh, it is such dreadful agony!"

Francis, intensely relieved at finding that this murmur was all that oppressed the conscience of his dying child, hastened to console her, bidding her banish all such fears, as sunshine dispels the mist. "My child," he said, "remember how amid His last agonies on the Cross our Blessed Lord and Master cried out, 'My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' Compare that with your trouble, and it will seem as a pale lamp in the presence of God's sun. So far from its being wrong to express what you suffer, even to a great cry of pain, I think that simplicity and truth oblige us to tell our griefs, when urgent, to those who can minister to them. How are they to relieve those who will not open their sorrows?"

"Oh, *mon père*," the good Sister said, "for years

I have been a very heap of suffering, I never knew what it was to be free from pain, yet I would not speak. Now, the loss of all strength and power makes my pain more overwhelming, but I was afraid to express it, lest I should be giving way to self-indulgence and cowardice, and so be unfaithful to my Dear Lord, Who suffered far more for me on the Cross."

The Bishop gave her absolution and his blessing, and after half an hour's agony her pure soul returned to God Who gave it. He had much conversation with her Sisters concerning the intense self-control of this holy woman, who even amid such suffering could strive so earnestly to say with David, "I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, for it was Thy doing." When telling me these facts, the dear Bishop said that he had never felt more tried himself, and that he had been as much spent with ministering to that deathbed as after preaching the Passion for three hours.

§ XVI. *Government of religious houses.*

The Bishop never advised that the government of nuns should be placed in the hands of Religious, especially those of the same Order. "There is great difference of opinion among those well qualified to judge," he wrote, "as to whether monasteries should be governed by the Ordinary, as was the ancient custom, still prevalent in Italy; or whether they should be subject to the authority of Religious, according to the custom so general in France, which arose four or five hundred years ago. For my own part, I must honestly say that I cannot agree to the latter opinion. Not but that such a system may be usefully carried out in certain places, but I think the other course far better, and I think the good nuns who wish to be placed under the rule of a religious Order do not know what they

ask; such spiritual rulers are too apt to deprive them of a holy freedom of spirit."

Francis meant more than he said; for more than a thousand years all religious communities were subject to the Ordinary, and the Bishop is their natural and true Superior. This rule is almost universal in Italy; *e.g.*, in Florence, out of fifty convents of women, four only are not subject to the Archbishop's jurisdiction, and the Holy See has endeavoured to restore this system of government.

§ XVII. *Superiors.*

Spiritual directors, Francis used to say, may be divided under four heads. There is one class extremely indulgent to themselves and to others; these, he said, are negligent; they take little care of their people, and let their ship drift where it will at the mercy of the waves. Such pastors are like those idols which have eyes and see not, ears and hear not, feet and walk not, and tongue, yet they speak not. They are "dumb-dogs which cannot bark"[1] against vice and evildoing. Another class are severe to themselves and others; they sometimes do harm through their resolute intention to do good. It is not always well to hold the reins too tight when we fear a horse may shy. Doubtless the pastor ought to be an example to his flock, but he should begin by bearing with himself, or what chance is there of his being merciful to others? Then again some men are indulgent to others, and stern towards themselves, and there is more excuse for such as these. The worst class of spiritual guides are those who are severe to others and indulgent towards themselves. This is really wrong, and such men remind one of the Pharisees, who "bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves

[1] Isa. xvi. 10.

will not move them with one of their fingers."[1] To all such our Lord says, "Physician, heal thyself."[2] "First cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."[3]

All these men need to learn the lessons of holy consistency, which teaches us to "do unto others as ye would they should do unto you." Deal with other men as you would be dealt with yourself, and measure for them as you would be measured for.

§ XVIII. *Complaints of Superiors unlawful.*

Certain Religious complained to the Bishop of Geneva that having had a harsh Superior, he was now replaced by one who was very ignorant: and their annoyance found vent in strong, even offensive expressions; whereupon Francis told them that it was wrong ever to speak thus of Superiors, however great their failings; God requires us to obey them, even if they are harsh and hard, quoting S. Paul, "Whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God."[4] He defended the conduct of this particular Superior, and ended by saying, "If Balaam was taught by his own ass, much more may you be sure that God, Who has put you under this Superior, will teach you through him according to His Own Good Pleasure, although it may not be according to yours. This worthy man is most amiable, and if he does not know much, at all events he acts well, and example is better than learning. It is better to be under a Superior whose life is more to be admired than his words, rather than one who abounds in the glowing language of holiness, while his own life does not correspond thereto."

[1] Matt. xxiii. 4.
[2] Luke iv. 23.
[3] Matt. vii. 5.
[4] Rom. xiii. 2.

§ XIX. *Superiors themselves subject.*

A Sister of the Visitation newly appointed Superior of a house lamented over it to the Bishop, complaining that she should lose the means of practising obedience, but he answered, "So far from it, my daughter, that you will have many more occasions of exercising yourself in that holy grace. Now you are only called upon to obey your Superior, but in your new office, every order you give to others will be equivalent to an act of obedience for yourself." The good Sister was perplexed at this, until Francis went on to say, "It is God Who, by permitting you to be elected as head of a Community, commands you to govern others. So, do you not see that when obeying this command, and humbly accepting the charge He gives you, you command out of obedience, and every order you give is as an act of obedience to Him Who bids you rule in His Name? Nevertheless, I am glad to see you enter upon your office with a reluctance to command and a great love for obedience: such a mind will lead you to rule by and in the spirit of love, and that love will make your own burden light, and the yoke of those you govern easy."

§ XX. *The distractions inseparable from office.*

A Superior indulged in longings after rest, and complained of the anxieties which spring from such a position, saying that they hindered her from close union with God. But Francis silenced her by answering that nothing can separate us from God save sin, reminding her how S. Paul defies everything in Heaven or earth "to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."[1]

"It is a great mistake," our dear Father said, "to

[1] Rom. viii. 39.

imagine that our lawful occupations estrange us from His Divine Love. On the contrary, there is nothing better calculated to bind us closely to God than such things done purely for His Glory; and to neglect them in order to seek God in prayer, study, solitude, silence, and recreation, or contemplation, is in fact to leave God and seek self and self-gratification. Any one who forsakes the duties which appertain to his or her ordinary calling, in order to give himself to occupations which he prefers, does wrong, however excellent those occupations may be; and while persisting in such a self-chosen service he does nothing really either for God or for himself. God requires to be served according to His Will, not ours, and there can be no real union with Him so long as we persist in following the path of self-will. There is a wide difference between being deprived of God Himself, and of the enjoyment a consciousness of His Presence carries with it. This last is not to be always realized amid the engrossing cares of a responsible office; but if you are content to forego it for God's Sake, and strive to offer up all your cares to Him, your loss will prove a gain, and what is taken from you in present enjoyment will be abundantly restored in solid advantage to your soul. If the Lord 'comforteth us in all our tribulation,' will He not much more be at hand to bless the work we do for Him and His greater Glory?"

To the same Superior our dear Father wrote, "As you undertake work for God in a spirit of holy obedience, He will forward you with His Help, and do your work with you, if you do yours with Him. Now His work is the sanctifying and perfecting souls. Be it yours to work on humbly, simply, and trustfully at this work, and be sure no really hurtful distractions will be permitted to trouble you. There is no real peace to be found in shunning such toil as is required of us for the Honour and Glory of God."

§ XXI. *Stedfastness in vocation.*

"Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called," says S. Paul.[1] One of the greatest sources of earthly happiness is to be content and satisfied with the state of life in which we find ourselves; he can never be at rest who desires something else. An unwelcome guest meets with sorry courtesy. Nevertheless, while cleaving to our vocation we must not make an idol of it. There is a certain vanity lurking under an excessive value for one's own vocation, which betrays itself in expatiating on the excellence thereof, and still more in despising other vocations. To "thank God that we are not as other men" indicates the vanity which hindered the Pharisee from being justified.[2] Speaking to his Sisters of the Visitation, our dear Father says, "The Sisters will speak very humbly of their little congregation, ceding the place of honour and esteem to all other Orders, while loving it best of all, and seeking all opportunities of testifying their love for their own special vocation. Even so a woman prefers her husband to all others by reason of her love for him; a sailor prefers his own ship to others that may be better built and manned, and we each prefer our own country as a matter of affection, though others may have many advantages over us. Let us freely grant that other congregations are better, richer, more to be admired, but nevertheless not so precious to us, inasmuch as this is what our Lord has appointed to us individually as our home, our ship, our bridegroom."

I have heard Francis speak with special admiration of his great friend the Bishop of Saluces, who, though so devoted to his congregation (the Oratory at Rome) that when constrained by the Pope to accept a Bishopric he obeyed with many tears, yet

[1] Rom. vii. 20. [2] Luke xviii. 14.

never spoke of it save in the most modest and humble terms, although his language concerning other Orders was warm and glowing. Such is the love of the Saints, ready to commend all save themselves and that which concerns them nearly. Nothing is more unworthy than the mind which cannot extol celibacy without condemning marriage, admire voluntary poverty without despising even well applied wealth; or obedience without depreciating those whose lot it is to rule, or community life without sneering at those who do their duty in the world.

§ XXII. *Obedience.*

The true grace of obedience does not lie in obeying a gentle, gracious Superior, who rules rather by love than authority, but in submitting to him whose yoke is severe, hard, or imperious. So our dear Father often used to say he always urged that those who are the guides of souls should rule as fathers, not masters, leading rather than driving (and assuredly his own example was an incomparable lesson in this respect); yet nevertheless he held that those who bear rule are bound to exercise a certain sharpness,[1] and he discouraged that sensitiveness in those subject to rule which makes us impatient and unwilling to bear anything unacceptable to self-love. He used to say, when speaking of this subject, that lime takes the rust off iron better than a less biting application; that rough teazles make smooth linen, and much hammering is needed to give a sword its sharp edge.

Undue indulgence on the part of Superiors leads to much evil among those subject to them, as too many sweetmeats make children ill. It is possible for one bearing spiritual rule not only to compromise his authority and bring it into contempt, but also to lead those he directs to obey him rather out of

[1] "Un peu de verdeur."

personal affection than for God's Sake, obeying the man they love, not the man God has placed over them because they love God. But the severity of a stern spiritual guide puts our real love of God to the test: if there is no personal attraction in obedience, then it is rendered solely out of love for God, with a single pure view to Him and His Glory. S. Francis used some times to liken him who obeys a severe, irritable, or impatient Superior, who is hard to please, to one drawing fresh water from a lion's head, such as we sometimes see in a fountain. It is "the sweetness which comes forth from the strong" of Samson's riddle,[1] and he who can offer this obedience sees God Alone when man commands, in the same spirit with which S. Peter obeyed the mysterious order, "Arise, Peter, kill and eat."[2]

§ XXIII. *Poverty.*

We hear a great deal about holy poverty, vows and professions of poverty, and the like, but I fear that many who are lavish in such words are far from heeding their true meaning. What we see generally is an untold eagerness in acquisition and no less dread of loss.

"In receiving Sisters," our Dear Father said, "I infinitely prefer such as are gentle and humble, though poor, to the rich that are not so meek and lowly. But it is all very well for us to say, 'Blessed are the poor;' worldly wisdom will never cease to say, 'Blessed are the rich monasteries and houses.' Be it ours to practise the poverty we admire, and to bear patiently with the contempt cast upon it.

"Again, I have constantly observed that no class of Christian people are so ready to weary us out with their perpetual talk about obedience, vows of

[1] Judges xiv. 14. [2] Acts x. 13.

obedience, blind obedience, total submission, and what not, as those who practically are least disposed to obey, and most eager about all the exemptions and dispensations and immunities they find so agreeable. In the same way I do not think that those Seculars who are sometimes spoken of so harshly as 'worldly' are nearly so disposed to rebel against the authority of their rightful pastors as are many among our Priests and Bishops. Ordinary men are content to submit to the institutions of our Lord Jesus Christ and His Apostles, and they are not so fastidious as to whom they will obey. Surely there is a vast fund of self-love in him who only cares to obey a Superior whom he has chosen himself, and over whom he may perhaps some day have the rule."

§ XXIV. *Simplicity.*

On one occasion, after a course of Lent sermons at Grenoble, the Bishop of Geneva visited the Grande Chartreuse, Dom Bruno d'Affrinques (a native of Saint Omer), being at that time Prior and General of the Order, a most learned and yet more simple-hearted man. Francis was greatly impressed by one instance of this simplicity. The Prior had conducted him to the guest-chamber, and for a time entered into most edifying conversation upon spiritual things; but by and by he took leave of the Bishop in order to go into choir and say matins at the appointed hour. Francis de Sales respected his obedience to rule, and the two holy men parted. But as the Prior was going to his cell he met one of the *procureurs* of the convent, who inquired whither he was going, and where he had left Mgr. de Genève?

"I have bade him good night," was the answer, "and I am now going to prepare for matins: to-morrow is a festival."

"Of a truth, Reverend Father," the monk exclaimed, "it seems to me that you are very uncourteous! It is not every day that such saintly prelates visit our desert, and God delights in hospitality! You will have plenty of other opportunities of chanting matins, but you may never have such a guest again; and who is so fit to entertain him as yourself?"

"My son," the Reverend Prior replied, "I believe that you are right and I am wrong." And, so saying, he returned to the Bishop, and said, ingenuously, "Monseigneur, as I went I met one of our Fathers, who tells me that I was wrong to have left you; since, though we shall have matins daily, we may not easily have Monseigneur de Genève beneath our roof! So I have come back to beg your pardon for my omission, which was mere want of thought." Francis always mentioned this anecdote with the most exceeding reverence for the good Prior's frankness and simplicity

§ XXV. *The signs of a true vocation.*

Our dear Father used to admire the well-balanced judgment of that worthy General of the Carthusians, who, while as exact in obedience to the smallest rule as any novice, yet knew how to avoid all such narrow-minded zeal as might have set a bad example to others. His predecessor had been so given to bodily mortifications that it was said of him that either he must have had no body or one of iron. Francis used to say of this General that he was like a bad doctor, who fills the churchyard; for many men sank under their attempts to imitate him, aiming with an indiscreet zeal at austerities beyond their strength; whereas this General's discretion and meekness fostered peace and humility of mind, and health of body.

A certain youth came to seek admittance into

the Chartreuse. He was of noble birth, and obviously accustomed to refinement and luxury. The Reverend Father set all the severity of the Order and the austerity of its rule before him, but the applicant replied that he had duly weighed that, and sought for strength from God.

Wishing to prove his courage, the General spoke more sternly. "Do not imagine this to be child's play," he said; "we require a miraculous gift of those who come among us. Have you that?"

"Not I, certainly," the young man answered, "but the Grace of God in me. I have entire trust in His Goodness, and believe that, having drawn me from the world and called me to serve Him in this vocation, He will not suffer me to look back, or seek the world again. Ask what test you will of me, I am confident that God will grant it, in witness of my vocation." And as he said this his eyes sparkled with devotion. The General embraced him with tears in his eyes, and, turning to the monks around, "My brothers," he said, "here is a most undoubted vocation. Be of good cheer, my son," he added, "God's Love for you, and your love and devotion to Him, may well be counted a miraculous gift."

In like manner, when postulants came to be examined by our dear Father, he set nothing before them save Calvary, with its nails and thorns and cross; interior abnegation, renunciation of self-will, crucifying self-opinion, death to self and life to God only; the need of casting aside all that is according to the senses and natural inclinations, and of giving themselves up wholly to the spirit of faith and of their Institution.

CHAPTER VI.

ON DEALINGS WITH HERESY.

§ I. *Francis' gift of converting heretics.*

OUR dear Father had a most special gift from God both of converting sinners within the Church, and of leading those that were without into the Fold. The perception of this gift led Cardinal Du Perron to say that "where it was a question of confounding heresy, he was ready to do it, but if you wanted to convert heretics, they must be taken to the Bishop of Geneva, who held a heavenly commission for that work." Cardinal de Bérulle used to say that God's Hand was plainly seen with Francis de Sales in such undertakings."

§ II. *Controversy.*

Francis had a special abhorrence for controversy, and he could not endure religious arguments to be carried on at table, or after meals, saying that such subjects were "not bottle topics."

I answered him once by saying that if we broke these bottles it was only to let out the flames of truth. "Much more of the flames of anger and altercation!" he exclaimed, "and in them you will find little light, and plenty of smoke and darkness."

He also greatly objected to controversial sermons, saying that the object of preaching should be rather to build than to destroy; to raise the tone of men's lives rather than to grapple with the disputes raised by those that are without the Church.

It was alleged in opposition to this, that contro-

versial preaching aimed at confirming the faith of Catholics by demolishing error.

"A specious argument," Francis said, "but experience has taught its worthlessness; partly owing to the many thorns and briars which beset all religious discussion, partly because the naturally corrupt mind of man is more disposed to take hold of an objection than of the answer which meets it, and thus he rejects bread for a serpent."

The Bishop's own plan, both in preaching and in private conference with Protestants, was to set forth and explain with his own special ease and clearness the simple truths of the Faith; saying that Truth in its graceful purity is attractive, and can win even the most hardened souls. Practically, this plan answered so well that if he could but obtain a quiet, uninterrupted hearing, he seldom failed to move and win those with whom he so dealt, or at least to leave such an impression as led to their returning to seek healing from the hand which had wounded them.

§ III. *How to deal with controversy in preaching.*

Francis de Sales' system hid the lancet, so that the patient was unconscious of its touch, and thus the irritation and annoyance of argument was avoided; on the contrary, it took men by guile, and they received truth, not merely without opposition, but gladly. Such simplicity is not devoid of energy, or the power of turning an opponent's arms against himself, in defence of the truth. Francis used to bring forward some truth as set forth in Holy Scripture (to which Protestants so constantly appeal), without apparently aiming at answering any objection, until his hearers found their own authorities supporting the doctrine against which they appealed. For instance, Protestants are wont to bring forward the passage, "It is the spirit that

quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing;"[1] as against the doctrine of the Real Presence. To this we reply either with S. Chrysostom, that the flesh without the spirit, that is to say without the Divinity, would profit nothing; or with S. Augustine, that such a gross carnal intelligence as these men of Capernaum had of the Truth profiteth nothing.

To the better understanding of this we need but to set forth the weakness of the flesh alone, deprived of union with the Godhead; and to show that it is the Divinity which enables the Humanity to infuse His Grace into the hearts of the faithful; so that the Spirit of God and the Sacred Flesh gives life to those souls which partake thereof in communion.

Or again, we show how materialistic and unworthy a view of the great mystery these men of Capernaum held, how different from the Catholic Faith: going on to show the truth of our Saviour's words, that in either of these senses "the flesh profiteth nothing;" and thus drawing confirmation of the orthodox doctrine from what was intended to impugn it. Francis has often told me that he habitually handled controversy thus, disguising its asperities, so that it scarcely seemed like controversy.

During his Advent and Lenten sermons at Grenoble the Protestants flocked more to hear Francis than their own ministers, because, as they said, he had not "the spirit of contention;" yet he always made part of his sermons to turn upon the truths of the Catholic doctrine, only in the way I have indicated, and going on to deduce lessons of practical piety and morality; while the Protestants marvelled to hear him prove the Articles of Catholic Faith by those very passages of Holy Scripture which they were wont to produce as opposed to them.

[1] John vi. 63.

§ IV. *Gentleness in Controversy.*

On one occasion, when Francis had been preaching at Thonon, upon the passage, "Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also;" a Protestant came up to him as he was leaving the church, and asked impudently whether he was prepared to do so, or whether he was one of those "who say and do not?"

"My dear brother," Francis answered, "I am a miserable wretch, full of weaknesses, nevertheless, by God's Grace I know very well what I *ought* to do. Yet, as 'the spirit is willing, but the flesh weak,' I cannot say what I *should* do. Without that Grace we can do nothing, and with it everything. In the Hand of Heavenly Grace a mere reed becomes an immoveable pillar. If we ought to be prepared," he continued, "to suffer death in defence of the Faith, how much more are we bound to bear insult rather than wound charity? Moreover, if I were so little able to correspond with God's Grace as not to be able to bear such an affront patiently, Holy Writ, which rebukes them that say and do not, also bids the disciples to observe and do what such men teach, but not to do after their works."

"When the officer of the high priest struck our Lord," the man pursued, "He did not turn the other cheek; on the contrary, He reproached the smiter with injustice."

"You mean to say, then, that our Lord was of those who say and do not?" Francis asked. "Surely that were blasphemy! We hold His actions in greater reverence; we do not presume to ask, Why doest Thou thus? It seems to me, so far as I may venture to interpret my Saviour's acts, that in His pity for the soul of the unhappy man who smote Him, He pointed out his sin, that it might be

[x] Matt. xxiii. 3.

repented of; while then, and through the weary hours that followed, He offered, not His Cheek only, but His entire Body to the smiters, until, Job-like, 'there was no whole place in Him.'"

§ V. *Maréchal de Lesdiguières.*

Francis de Sales' personal holiness was recognised everywhere, by Protestants as by Catholics. At the time of his preaching the Advent and Lent stations at Grenoble, the Maréchal de Lesdiguières, who was King's Lieutenant, though still a Protestant, sought the Bishop out with every attention, and not unfrequently went to hear him preach, with an increasing interest and reverence. The Marshal had long interviews with him, and lost no opportunity of expressing his admiration for M. de Genève, as he always called him. The Protestants around took alarm at this; they went so far as to hold a consistory, in order to remonstrate with the Marshal concerning his intimacy with the Bishop of Annecy, as they pointedly called Francis. But the Duc de Lesdiguières intimated to these meddlers that although if they wished to see him on business, he was at their service, any consistorial remonstrances would lead to one result only; those who presumed to offer them might have come in at the door, but they would certainly make their exit by the window!

Frustrated in this attempt, they contrived to get a noble friend of the Marshal's to represent their griefs to the Lord Lieutenant. "Tell these gentlemen," he replied, "that I have lived long enough to know how to behave to Bishops; they are not of the same stuff as their ministers; and you may tell N——s" (naming a minister who had been in his own household) "that when I see princes of the blood turn minister, as now they are Bishops and Cardinals, I shall know how to behave to them too.

As to M. de Genève, if I were in his position, and Prince of Geneva as he is, I should make my people obey and recognise me. I think I know rather more about his rights and dues than these good gentlemen; they are not fit to teach a man of my age and position."

The Marshal's intimacy with Francis de Sales went on increasing, and led eventually to his conversion.

§ VI. *A challenge.*

During the Bishop's course of preaching at Grenoble, his sermons were so thronged by Protestants as well as Catholics, that the *prêches* were deserted. Irate at this, one of the ministers challenged Francis to a formal conference. The challenge was accepted at once, although the Bishop was warned that the minister in question was notoriously foul-mouthed.

"Never mind," Francis answered. His friend went on to say that he would be impertinently treated, and that such a man would have no respect for his office.

"So much the better!" was the reply. "I ask nothing more; God's Glory will arise from my confusion."

"But," his friend remonstrated, "you will expose yourself to insult."

"Our Lord bore far more than I can," the Bishop said. "He was steeped in insults."

"You do indeed take a very high line," was the remark.

"What would you have me say?" Francis asked. "I trust that God will give me grace to bear all the insults this man can offer; and where man is humbled, God will be exalted. The result will be many a conversion. God will bring forth good works to His Own Glory from our humiliation. Do you not remember how the Apostles went forth

rejoicing to suffer shame for His Name?[1] Let us be of good cheer; God will help us; those that hope in Him shall never be confounded."

The conference in question never came to pass. The ministers, mistrusting their own argumentative powers, contrived to get the authorities to stop it, and so saved their credit while they evaded a certain defeat.

[1] Acts v. 41.

THE END.

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